



CITY OF BANGOR

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Testimony on LD 1244 – An Act to Establish Requirements for Warming Shelters

April 7, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, I am Deborah Laurie, City Manager of the City of Bangor. On behalf of the Bangor City Council I am providing testimony on LD 1244, “An Act to Establish Requirements for Warming Shelters.”

Maine’s winter months are known for bouts of very cold temperatures and tempestuous weather and anyone who has lived here through the winter can attest that having a warm and dry place to go is necessary, and this is particularly true for Mainers who experience unsheltered homelessness.

Within the City of Bangor, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness have had three overnight warming center options and one primary daytime center available in addition to emergency shelters beginning in November each year and ending roughly in late March or early April. The nonprofit organizations that have been committed to opening and operating these dedicated spaces do so to ensure that everyone in the community has access to a safe, warm and accepting location to rest at night. They do so primarily with some financial support from the Maine State Housing Authority. However, the funding allocated often barely covers overhead costs and still largely falls short of ensuring those staffing these centers receive compensation for their time.

As it currently reads, LD 1244 does not include the necessary funding to safely and effectively run and maintain a warming center space in every municipality and county. Assuming every municipality has jurisdiction over a suitable space for a warming center, colder weather months would necessitate a center being open nearly every day, 24-hours per day. Rising electricity and heating costs, the difficulty many centers face in recruiting and keeping volunteers or staff available throughout the season, and the overhead costs of upkeep and safely staffing a warming center must be factored into the mandate established in this bill. Without funding to cover all of the costs associated with operating warming centers throughout the season, as written the bill represents an unfunded mandate, accordingly the Bangor City Council will be unable to support this bill as written.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

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