



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of*

**LD 2136, An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals**  
*Before the Joint Select Committee on Housing*

Good afternoon Senator Pierce, Representative Gere and honorable members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing. My name is Kristen Cloutier, and I serve as the Assistant House Majority Leader, representing House District 94, part of my hometown of Lewiston. I am pleased to cosponsor **LD 2136, An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals**.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, at least 2,516 people are living without a home in Maine on any given night. That number, however, can drastically fluctuate, as seen in the 2023 Point in Time Count conducted by MaineHousing. This study found that, on January 24, 2023, 4,258 Mainers were living without a home. While many of those without a home are adults, it is important to highlight that many Maine children are also affected by homelessness. Currently, 55% of all Maine households who experience homelessness have at least one child in their families. That statistic would not be acceptable anywhere, but especially not in the United States, the richest nation in the world.

As the members of this committee know all too well, affordable housing continues to be increasingly difficult to access, and over the past few years, a rising number of Mainers have become housing insecure. Additionally, we do not have systems in place to adequately care for the mental health of our unhoused neighbors. Instead, we ask shelter staff members to provide these services to their clients, in addition to providing a place of safety, warmth and nourishment. We can and must do better to support one of our most vulnerable populations and to resource those caring for them.

LD 2136 would increase the shelter operating subsidy in the general fund from \$2.5 million to \$12.5 million, and while this bill will not fix the issues of homelessness or housing affordability in our state, it will help to alleviate some of the burden on our shelters, who are struggling and require more financial resources to stay afloat.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I am happy to answer any questions.