[DATE]

Re: Funding Bills on the Special Appropriations Table Pending Passage to be Enacted

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is [NAME], and I am [TITLE] with [ORGANIZATION]. [Provide some information about your organization if you’d like].

First, I would like to express my deepest thanks for ensuring that certain Sections of MaineCare received rate increases to at least 125% of minimum wage as part of the budget process. This is monumental and sorely needed. Thank you!

I am writing to today asking for your support in funding the bills listed below, which are currently on the Special Appropriations Table and were not funded as part of the budget process. I would strongly encourage the Committee to pass these bills, either as standalone bills or through funding available within LD 1733 An Act To Provide Allocations for the Distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds.

* LD 211 An Act To Support Emergency Shelter Access for Persons Experiencing Homelessness – This bill (as passed to be enacted) includes ongoing General Fund appropriations of $3,000,000 per year to the Shelter Operating Subsidy program within MaineHousing to support operations and capacity at all emergency homeless shelters across the State.
* LD 654 An Act To Create a 24-hour Shelter Capital Project Funding Program – This bill establishes the 24-hour Shelter Capital Project program within MaineHousing to support new construction or expansion of emergency 24-hour shelters for persons experiencing homelessness. The bill includes a one-time General Fund appropriation of $3,000,000 in fiscal year 2021-22 to MaineHousing to fund the program.
* LD 415 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services To Increase MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Targeted Case Management Services To Reflect Inflation – This resolve requires DHHS to amend its rules governing MaineCare reimbursement for targeted case management services to provide an increase reflecting cost increases from 2010 to 2020.

The continuum of care for homelessness, including emergency shelters, direct support services, and affordable and supportive housing, depends upon a variety of funding systems, most of which are unpredictable, and all of which do not meet the system’s financial needs, particularly now. Shelters have been in crisis mode for the past year attending to the health, safety, and well-being of people seeking shelter and their staff amid the pandemic. Shelter and support service staff have been working around the clock to provide emergency shelter essential services, targeted case management services, and housing navigation assistance to people experiencing homelessness in emergency shelters, hotels, or sleeping outside. And, staff have been working to quickly house people experiencing homelessness amid an extremely tight housing market. Maine lacks affordable and supportive housing commensurate with Maine’s need, and Maine lacks a stable workforce to ensure people maintain housing stability through longer-term follow-up support services. Simply put, the system hasn’t had enough resources to maintain sufficient capacity to meet the need for years – and the pandemic has exponentially worsened this crisis.

Without creating solutions at a more significant scale we won't make a real difference in ending homelessness in Maine. These bills would greatly assist Maine in this endeavor, and to build back better from the pandemic, ensuring that Maine’s most vulnerable and the systems that care for them aren’t left behind.

Please support the funding for these bills so that we can ensure Maine’s homeless continuum of care can provide critical emergency shelter, support services, and housing for people experiencing homelessness. Now is the time to work together to end and prevent homelessness in Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.