

# Tedford Housing

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**Written Testimony addressed to the  
Joint Committee on Labor and Housing  
in support of LD654, *An Act to create a 24-hour shelter capital project funding program*  
Cross Building, Room 202, 100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333**

March 19, 2021

To Chair Senator Craig Hickman and Chair Representative Mike Sylvester:

My name is Rota Knott. I am a resident of Gray and the executive director of Tedford Housing, which operates a 16-bed adult shelter and a 6-unit family shelter in Brunswick, along with six permanent supportive housing apartment buildings across the state. On behalf of myself and Tedford Housing, I am testifying in support of LD654, *An Act to create a 24-hour shelter capital project funding program*.

For years, Tedford Housing has struggled to meet the basic need of emergency shelter for residents of Southern Midcoast Maine due to the limited capacity of our shelters. During fiscal year 2020, we served 57 individual adults and 53 family members in our two shelters. However, we also turned away 307 individuals and 146 families, including 249 children, from 12 different Maine counties due to a dearth of available beds. We lacked the necessary resources to address the need for emergency shelter long before the COVID-19 pandemic, but now the demand is greater than ever and people are staying longer in our emergency shelters.

The pandemic has had an unparalleled impact on the need for emergency shelters and amplified the existing crisis of homelessness across the State. While Tedford Housing began keeping our shelter doors open 24 hours a day to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our guests, we have also had to reduce the capacity at our adult shelter to just 10 beds in order to provide adequate social distancing. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, however, our dedicated case managers have continued to connect both our shelter guests and our outreach clients to permanent housing and the supportive services that will ensure they are successful in maintaining long-term stability.

But homelessness is more than a housing crisis. It is a human services crisis, a public health crisis, and economic crisis about which every single citizen should be concerned. Investing in emergency shelter will return dividends by creating housing stability that will have a significant and lasting impact for some of the most vulnerable and often disenfranchised of Maine's people.

LD654 will provide crucial funding to aid in the construction of new 24-hour emergency shelters, replace existing aging facilities like ours at Tedford Housing that



United Way of  
Mid Coast Maine

United Way of  
Androscoggin County



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cannot be renovated or expanded due to site and zoning constraints, and other shelter capital projects. There is currently no funding available to support such capital projects, and the State of Maine has never invested in the emergency shelter infrastructure that helps to create a conduit to housing stability for its people.

LD654 does not compete with other legislation introduced this session to support people experiencing homelessness, but rather is part of an effort to create the collective impact necessary to solve the complex problem of homelessness in Maine. In fact, the bill will provide important gap funding for capital projects at 24-hour shelters where emergency response funding is currently lacking and will serve as a bridge to a more substantial system of care.

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that every resident of the State of Maine has a safe place to sleep at night, and to investing in infrastructure and services that have the power to change lives, strengthen our communities, enhance economic well-being, and alter the fabric of our society. Passing LD654 will be an investment in the future of Mainers in need and in the future of Maine.

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Scott Upham

Sincerely,



Rota L. Knott  
Executive Director



United Way of  
Mid Coast Maine

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Rota Knott  
Brunswick

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LD654 will provide crucial funding to aid in the construction of new 24-hour emergency shelters, replace existing aging facilities like ours at Tedford Housing that cannot be renovated or expanded due to site and zoning constraints, and other shelter capital projects. There is currently no funding available to support such capital projects, and the State of Maine has never invested in the emergency shelter infrastructure that helps to create a conduit to housing stability for its people.

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Sincerely,  
Rota L. Knott  
Executive Director