Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

An Act to Support Emergency Shelter Funding Using Revenue from the Real Estate Transfer Tax
February 9, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jane Field, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, a nonprofit coalition of seven mainline Protestant member denominations that have more than 400 congregations in Maine with over 50,000 parishioners in their care. Founded in 1938, the Council speaks with a prophetic voice of faith, connecting people within, through, and beyond the church to create a more just, compassionate, and peaceful world. All that we do is grounded in **the central value of love of neighbor** and in the biblical imperative to **protect the vulnerable and hold those who harm them accountable**.

It's because of these core values that the Council supported passage of LD 698 and now **supports passage of LD 2124**. Because of our long-standing commitment, grounded in Hebrew and Christian scripture, to the economically poor and vulnerable, we urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 2124.

The one-year funding that LD 698 made possible in 2025 made a real difference, but only temporarily—the way a band-aid makes a temporary difference but isn't a solution. Without the ongoing, predictable funding that LD 2124 would make possible, Maine's shelters will once again be facing a crisis that will lead to further closures.

Currently, Maine is experiencing a housing crisis, and shelters provide initial emergency care and support, the same way emergency rooms do in our healthcare system. Individuals and families require shelter due to various individual and systemic socio-economic issues, and our churches know that individuals and families will take to the streets or encampments without fiscally viable shelters. It is unthinkable to imagine folks facing that nightmare, especially during a winter as brutally cold as this one has been.

Emergency homeless shelters reduce human suffering, and we in the church care passionately about reducing the suffering of our neighbors. We also care passionately about good government and sound public policy and are aware that studies as recently as 2025 have shown that adequately funding access to homeless shelters makes sense on that front as well, as it reduces crime, emergency room use, and mortality rates.

For all these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote ought to pass on LD 2124.