**Statewide Homeless Council**

**May 9, 2017**

**9:30 AM to 2:00 PM**

**Location: MaineHousing 353 Water Street Augusta Maine State Housing Authority**

**MaineHousing Conference Room, behind Reception Desk**

**SHC meets regularly the second Tuesday of each month**

**Attendees:** Cullen Ryan (CHOM), Donna Kelley (KBH), Boyd Kronholm (BAHS), Josh D’Alessio (PCHC), David McKluskey (CCM), Chet Barnes (DHHS), Jon Bradley (Preble Street)

**Guests:** Cindy Namer (MaineHousing), Ginny Dill (Shalom House), Melanie LaMore Gagnon (Safe Voices), Alley Smith (Veterans, Inc.), Chris Bicknell (New Beginnings), Chris Roberts (HUD), Mary LaRoche (Dept. of Corrections), Rob Parritt (CoP OSS), Arwen Agee (VA), Mary Frances Bartlett (City of Augusta), Mike Merrill (VOA), Melissa Morrill (VOA)

**Minutes:** Scott Tibbitts (MaineHousing)

**Minutes from the April 11,** **2017** meeting were reviewed and accepted as submitted.

**Policy Committee:** (please see Policy Committee notes, attached, for full details)

-Discussed the FY2017 Appropriations Omnibus and its impact on housing programs.

-**MOTION** - SHC write to Sen. Collins regarding changes to Medicare and the impact on Maine. **PASSED.**

- SHC had suggested that the 1115 Waiver would be a good way to provide services to Long Term Stayers. DHHS has now released a new 1115 proposal, but it would make accessing services more difficult and more expensive. There are public hearings and a comment period- members were encouraged to weigh in.

-**MOTION** – SHC submit a written response to the proposals detailing the impact they would have on homeless populations, and the potential of leading to increases in homelessness due to impacts on the larger population. **PASSED**.

**BRAP:** BRAP was originally created for people leaving hospital settings with a Mental Health diagnosis. It was later expanded to include homeless with a MH Dx. It is currently working with Dept of Corrections as part of Discharge Planning for inmates with MH Dx. And they are now being asked about expanding again to cover people with Substance Abuse Disorders.

-Why not create a new program/resource for this population, rather than continue to dilute/redirect BRAP?

-While a new resource would be great, focusing on the distinction between an SU and a MH Dx does not seem like a good reason to not utilize BRAP for SU populations. So often, people have Co-Occurring disorders, but if their ‘primary’ is SA, they are disqualified from BRAP, even if they also have a MH Dx.

-BRAP was written specifically to serve a MH population. Yes, it could be re-written, but that would not create any more funding or units, it would just spread it thinner.

-DHHS is developing Opiate Health Homes- based on the Behavioral Health Home Model – that’s an option.

-Housing First works for SA, as far as Housing, even if they are still actively using. It still decreases overall costs for Police calls, ER visits, and many other things.

-It was suggested that SHC address this issue in the Plan to bring parity between SU and MH.

**LTS:** Jon made a **MOTION** to change the terminology from ‘Long Term Stayers’ to ‘Long Term Homeless’ in order to avoid the impression that it is only about those who are staying in shelters. This was expanded to ‘Long Term and Vulnerable Homeless’ to be more inclusive and add the vulnerability component.

-The definition of the term includes unsheltered individuals. The reports include those individuals. Changing the language now would seem to unnecessarily complicate things – it would be much easier to just make it clearer in any information we distribute or trainings we do – like the Coordinated Entry trainings coming up – that the term is not limited to only those staying in shelters.

-Targeting the most vulnerable does not always mean those with the longest lengths of time homeless.

-Including ‘Vulnerable’ would not only make it way too broad, it would require new definitions and new reports and we would not be able to compare future numbers to past reports.

- Sticking with the “LTS” language just because it was a successful effort could make it difficult for us to move forward - the population we need to focus on has changed and we need to adapt.

- There are two things here – a clear desire to serve those with the longest length of time homeless and a clear desire to serve those who are the most vulnerable. While there may be much overlap, there may not be a way to make one definition cover everyone in both categories. We can have more than one priority, right?

-The current definition lines up well with HUD priorities, and the CoCs and other groups have voted to prioritized based on this definition. So much has been built around this language. If we change it, we have to change everything that is tied to it.

-After discussion Jon **withdrew** his initial proposal and made a new one: **MOTION -** Beginning next month, SHC develop a plan to expand our focus and redefine our target population in a way that includes those who are most vulnerable. **PASSED.**

Portland LTS numbers continue to decrease, and they currently have 106 clients successfully in housing (130 total housing placements. Some have died since being housed, and some have returned and been rehoused).

Bangor now has first responders and law enforcement attending their LTS meetings. They recently discovered that 56 people who have stayed at PCHC at some point are currently in jail, and are likely to return to the shelter upon release. They are working on ways to connect with them while they are still incarcerated to begin planning to find housing alternatives. One issue they have identified as a result of this is that if someone is to be in jail for less than 90 day, their MaineCare remains active, but if greater than 90 day, it will end, unless they check a very small box on a particular form. People need to be aware of this.

**LTS and STEP:** Six of the nine Long Term Stayers currently in Bangor were housed last year using STEP but they are now back at the shelter.

-STEP was not designed for and is not appropriate for this population. Why were they given STEP?

-The language for our Housing First model says to provide the most appropriate available resource. At the time, BRAP was not available; S+C was not available; HCV was not available. It was either issue them STEP or let them languish in shelter longer (and that now has financial consequences).

-The returns have been because the subsidy ran out, not because the program did not work – these people did not ‘fail’, in fact, they remained housed for a year and that in itself is remarkable!

-Knowing that STEP would run out, why wasn’t there a plan in place to transition them to something else?

-There was still no S+C, and Navigators asked, but were told the clients were not eligible for BRAP because they were currently housed - in STEP.

-They could have appealed that denial. They tried, and were clearly told the clients were not eligible, so they didn’t bother appealing every time.

-It is not a failure of STEP, or the Navigators, or the clients. It is a failure of the system that did not have other options available in the first place, and did not allow for other housing resources to be put in place before these folks reached the end of their STEP stay and ended up homeless again.

-Any transition planning of moving from one subsidy to another needs to happen before the initial short term subsidy is about to end – as early as the first 3 month check in they should start working on an alternative.

-But that early on, if they are doing even remotely well, they appear to be making progress, and you want them to succeed – there have been LTS’s who have maintained housing after STEP. It is not impossible.

-The Navigators need to be following up – and making sure there is an exit strategy – even if that means getting them on another form of subsidy.

**Point in Time Update:** The final data has been submitted to HUD. There were 1188 people identified as homeless in Shelters, Safe Havens, or Unsheltered, on the night of the count. There was an emphasis on Youth homelessness this year, including a new Parenting Youth category. Youth, which includes both ‘Under 18’ and ‘18 to 24’ as well as ‘unaccompanied youth’ and ‘children/youth in families’, made up 20% of the overall count this year.

**MaineHousing Updates:** Representatives from the Boston and Manchester HUD Field Offices will be visiting Maine on May 12, from 10:00 to Noon at the Maine State Library to talk with CoC members and other interested parties about HUD goals, the CoC Merger, and collaboration between CoC’s and local PHA’s. They will also be attending the DHHS Homeless Youth Forum at the Augusta Armory that afternoon, 12:30 to 4:00.

-The application for phase 2 of the Rural Youth Peer Network grant has been submitted.

-MaineHousing is moving forward with developing the RFP for the National Housing Trust Fund Award.

**CoC Updates:** The Merger of the Portland and Balance of State CoC’s was approved by HUD. We just need to work out the details. Cullen recently spoke with Norm Suchar regarding letters submitted to HUD about how the CoC process could be refined and improved. Nearly all New England CoC’s weighed in on the topic. We hope to have an official response soon.

**Regional Homeless Council Updates:** Region 1, nothing new. Region 2, looking for new topics for trainings & workshops. Region 3, meeting tomorrow with representatives from 6 local Housing Authorities to talk about Voucher Set Asides or other ways they can increase housing accessibility for those who are homeless.

**Populations:**

**SA:** As if the Opioid crisis were not bad enough, Meth is making an appearance in Portland.

**Veterans:** VASH vouchers are now 100% issued.

* Coordinated Entry has shown that not everyone with Veteran status is getting a VA referral.
* There are currently 86 Veterans on the By-Name list.
* GDP programs should know the results of their recent applications by mid June.
* Veterans Inc. has applied for the ‘Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program’.
* Melissa Morrill provided an update on the Cabin in the Woods project. It has been in the works for 6 years now and they finally closed on the loan on March 17th. The project includes 22 Cabins, one of them for an on site manager. 16 are 1BR, 5 are 2BR. There are also walking paths and common open spaces. 16 of the units will have VASH, the rest are LIHTC with rent limits. Groundbreaking is scheduled for May 19th, and if all goes well, they will be ready for occupancy in November.

**Youth:** DHHS Forum on Ending & Preventing Youth Homelessness in Maine, Friday at the Augusta Armory.

**DV:** Auburn Housing Authority will be providing set aside Vouchers for DV.

**Families:** Still no Family Shelters in Penobscot County, but CE may be a way to show there are homeless Families there.

**Age 55+:** no updates

**Op Ed Topics:** Piece on Opioids was published in the Press Herald recently. Next topic will include the Camden National Bank Shelter fund discussed last month, and will tie in with the release of the new Plan.

**The Maine Plan To End and Prevent Homeless:** The latest version of the Plan was reviewed with the hope of finalizing the DRAFT so it can be sent to Regional HC’s and the CoC for their review and comments soon.

-As discussed earlier, we want to integrate SU and MH more.

-Need to better clarify where numbers are actual statistics and where they are estimates.

-Need to include footnotes with definitions of any and all terms that people who do not work with this stuff every day may not be familiar with.

-The plan covers Chronically Homeless, and Circumstantially Homeless, but there are many individuals and families that do not fit neatly into either of those – they may need more help than those who are only circumstantially homeless in order to prevent them from becoming Chronically Homeless.

**Other Business:** Need to clarify SHC Membership status.

**Next Meeting:** June 13, 2017 from 9:30 to 2:00 at MaineHousing.

**Policy/Advocacy Update – 5/2/2017**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**FY17 Appropriations –** Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress announced late in the evening Sunday, April 30 that they reached a deal on a final FY17 spending package to fund the federal government through September and avert a government shutdown. The spending package is expected to be voted on in the House and Senate before the current Continuing Resolution ends on 5/5. At more than $1.07 trillion, the final budget agreement upholds the bipartisan deal made in late 2015 to lift the spending caps required by Budget Control Act for defense and non-defense programs. The deal does not include any of the $18 billion in cuts requested by the Trump administration for non-defense programs, which include affordable housing and community development.

**HUD FY17 Appropriations** – The FY17 spending bill funds most HUD programs at or above FY16 levels, but below the high-water marks provided in the draft versions. The only programs to see funding cuts compared to FY16 were the Public Housing Operating Fund ($4.4 billion in FY17 compared to $4.5 billion in FY16) and Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities ($146 million in FY17 compared to $151 million in FY16).

* **Tenant-Based Rental Assistance:**  The spending package provides $20.292 billion for tenant-based rental assistance, $18.355 billion of which is to renew previous contracts. The bill allocates $47 million for Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) which includes an additional investment of roughly 5,000 vouchers, $7 million of which is to serve Native American veterans. The bill also provides $10 million to support new Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers and $120 million for Section 811 mainstream vouchers.
* **Project-Based Rental Assistance:** The bill provides $10.816 billion to renew project-based rental assistance contracts for calendar year 2017, an increase of $186 million from the FY16 funding level.
* **Homeless Assistance Grants:** The bill increases funding for homeless assistance programs to $2.383 billion from $2.25 billion in FY16. The bill targets $43 million to address youth homelessness and waives the requirement that youth 24 years of age and under provide third-party documentation to receive housing and supportive services within the Continuums of Care. The bill extends the authorization for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), which is set to expire this year, by one additional year.
* **HOME:** The bill would level-fund the HOME Investments Partnerships program (HOME) at $950 million.
* **CDBG:** The bill would level-fund the Community Development Block Grant program at $3 billion.
* **USICH:** The bill provides a one-year extension for the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

**Trump Administration & HUD:** (From the NLIHC) The White House announced that President Trump has nominated Pamela Patenaude to serve as HUD deputy secretary. Ms. Patenaude is the president of the J. Ronald Terwilliger Foundation for Housing America's Families and has deep knowledge of, experience with, and proven commitments to affordable housing. Responding to the announcement, NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel stated, "The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) congratulates Pam Patenaude on her nomination as deputy secretary of HUD. Ms. Patenaude is a strong leader with decades of experience cultivating bipartisan solutions to America's affordable rental housing crisis. NLIHC urges the Senate to confirm Ms. Patenaude. We look forward to working with her to preserve, improve and expand the critical programs necessary to end homelessness and housing poverty for the millions of families who struggle to pay their rent each month."

**President Trump’s proposed budget (from CBPP)**: President Trump released his “skinny” budget on 3/16 – a budget blueprint for FY 18 (the full budget will likely be submitted to Congress in May). The President’s FY 18 budget blueprint includes a $6.2 billion—or 13.2%—cut to HUD programs compared to FY16 to help offset a $54 billion increase to defense spending. Specifically, the HUD budget:

* Eliminates CDBG, HOME and Choice Neighborhoods.

According to CBPP, the budget says the federal government will continue to help 4.5 million households pay the rent, but it provides no details on funding for HUD’s rental assistance programs, which helped nearly 4.9 million households in 2016. But preliminary budget documents leaked the week of 3/6 indicate that the President’s proposals in the full budget request will likely include significant rental assistance cuts, including:

* Public housing cut by $2 billion, or 30%.
* Housing Choice Vouchers would be funded at $19.3 billion, about $300 million below the 2016 level, and about $1.7B below the amount estimated needed to renew all vouchers in 2018. This is equal to 200,000 vouchers being lost.
* Cuts that would result in about 25,000 homes for seniors and people with disabilities being lost.

**Effect of the President’s FY 18 HUD budget cuts on Maine (per CBPP analysis):**

| **State** | **Vouchers Cut** | **Public Housing Funding Cut** | **CDBG Funding Cut** | **HOME Funding Cut** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ME** | **-1,071** | **-$6,290,625** | **-$16,494,704** | **-$4,303,357** |

**National Housing Trust Fund:**  With President Trump’s proposed cuts to NDD programs, and the potential effect on housing programs (see above), funding for the HTF could face significant budget cuts and other threats this year. In the past, Congress has proposed to gut the HTF and to use its funding to fill holes in the HUD budget. Congress must instead ensure that all affordable housing programs—including the HTF—are fully funded. The HTF is the only federal program designed to build and preserve housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes. We must ensure that the program is protected – not eliminated.

**The Affordable Care Act (ACA):** The House Republican health plan, “The American Health Care Act,” unveiled on 3/6 and then pulled from the House floor before a vote could take place, is being revamped for reconsideration in Congress. According to CBPP, the newly released Meadows-MacArthur amendment does nothing to mitigate the American Health Care Act’s (AHCA) coverage losses of 24 million people, $839 billion in Medicaid cuts, or large increases in premiums and out-of-pocket costs for moderate-income and older individual-market consumers. It does, however, eliminate key Affordable Care Act (ACA) protections for people with pre-existing conditions. The Meadows-MacArthur amendment would largely restore pre-ACA rules for people with pre-existing conditions. Just like before the ACA, insurers could discriminate based on medical history, eliminate coverage for key health services, and impose annual and lifetime limits on benefits.

**S. 743: A Bill to Strengthen the United Stated Interagency Council on Homelessness:** Senators Collins and Reed introduced legislation on 3/28 to strengthen and eliminate the sunset for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). Referred to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

**Senate Democrats Unveil Comprehensive Infrastructure Plan, Affordable Housing Included:** Senate Democrats unveiled their infrastructure plan: A Blueprint to Rebuild America’s Infrastructure. The $1 trillion plan aims to create over 15 million jobs, and addresses issues including broadband internet, downtown revitalization, water and sewer, schools, roads and bridges, and also includes investments for public and affordable housing.

***NEW –* H.R. 161: Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act. – Sponsored by Representative Hastings (Florida).** This bill would amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a grant program to provide supportive services in permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals and families, and for other purposes. Referred to the House Energy and Commerce committee.

**H.R. 948: The Common Sense Housing Investment Act, to help end homelessness and housing poverty through comprehensive tax reform. – Referred to House Ways and Means, Financial Services committee*.*** According to the NLIHC the [*Common Sense Housing Investment Act*](http://cqrcengage.com/nlihc/app/thru?ep=AAAAC2Flc0NpcGhlcjAxBuGrlqP3Tp_K3rEdOWjgZeJ_hryGlWg6W1-Ie7x-bYwgcrCzEvvjb3EyWJGKtkq4DRQja4hjOcWqz23UlCVubtpNTPbYa70emTvSF167-1pXOTkBF64RLMTUxap557_93WQOGSGjLVaPdtfEZaxL3FiKksM3qt8yiGwSRimIg3UbuvAzrzb7xo0bboFv55pXZbMPQ9mQpjGZJEkn-8nCj9CVpJTW5ZcspS596EsAZ6s&lp=0) calls for modest reforms to the mortgage interest deduction, a $70 billion tax write-off that largely benefits America's highest-income households, and reinvests the significant savings into providing affordable housing for people with the greatest needs. The bill would boost funding for the Housing Trust Fund, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, public housing, and rental assistance solutions-without adding any costs to the federal government. The reforms are simple and bipartisan. First, the bill reduces the size of a mortgage eligible for the tax break from $1 million to the first $500,000-impacting fewer than 6% of homeowners. Second, the bill converts the mortgage interest deduction into a tax credit. This would allow 15 million more low and moderate income homeowners who currently do not benefit from the mortgage interest deduction to get a much-needed tax break. The United for Homes campaign-including more than 2,300 national, state, and local organizations and elected officials in all 435 congressional districts-strongly endorses H.R 948.

**H.R. 6378: To amend the Public Health Service Act to revise the amount of minimum allotments under the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness Program. *– No new action/update.*** Sponsor: Rep. Peter Welch [D-VT], co-sponsor Rep. Cramer, Kevin [R-ND].

**H.R. 4888: Ending Homelessness Act of 2016** – ***No new action/update.***Introduced on 3/23 by House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA).

**S.993/H.R.1854, The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act – *No new action/update.*** Introduced by Senators Franken (D-MN) - Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Collins (R-GA)-Scott (D-VA).

**State Legislation Update:**

* **Governor LePage released his 2017-2018 Biennial Budget late on Friday, January 6, 2016**. **The budget targets many areas of DHHS’ spending, with a stated goal of “stabilizing DHHS.” – *Public hearings on the biennial budget will be held between 2/6 and 3/8. The full Biennial Budget schedule can be found online:*** [***http://legislature.maine.gov/uploads/originals/detailed-biennial-ph-schedule-blocks.pdf***](http://legislature.maine.gov/uploads/originals/detailed-biennial-ph-schedule-blocks.pdf)

**Areas of interest include:**

* + Eliminating eligibility of "able-bodied parents" with earnings over 40% of the Federal Poverty Level from Medicaid. – The Public Hearing for this portion was held on 2/21; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. – **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Eliminating eligibility of 19 & 20 year-olds from MaineCare. – The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/21; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed but with the recognition that the department needs to submit language to accompany this initiative.**
  + Eliminating the General Assistance Program. (Part ZZZ). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative (as well as the initiative that would eliminate the program for non-citizens, part HHHH); the minority voted of the Committee voted for both sets of initiatives as proposed.**
    - **General Assistance Minority vote:** Six members of the HHS Committee voted to include additional changes to the General Assistance program. This minority initiative would do the following: (1) eliminate GA for an individual that has timed off of TANF until a period of 5 years has passed and (2) make an applicant for GA who voluntarily abandons or refuses to use an available resource without just cause ineligible for 120 days from the date of abandoning the resource.
  + Reducing the maximum lifetime cap for TANF, from 60 to 36 months. (PART FFFF). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative, as well as the initiative to eliminate coverage for individuals with drug felony convictions (Part EEEE) removing most good cause exemptions; the minority voted of the Committee voted for Part FFFF as proposed, but amended Part EEEE to allow an individual to qualify for TANF after a period of 10 years has passed since the completion of incarceration for a drug felony conviction.**
  + Repealing the provision that requires DHHS to provide a food supplement program for non-citizens, who would otherwise be eligible for SNAP benefits but for their immigration status. (Part KKKK). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget is 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Repealing the provision that requires DHHS to provide supplemental security income for non-citizens, who would otherwise be eligible for Supplemental Security Income but for their immigration status. (Part KKKK). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Repealing the provision that requires DHHS to provide a financial assistance to non-citizens, who would otherwise be eligible for TANF benefits but for their immigration status. (Part KKKK). The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget was held on 2/22; budget block work sessions began the week of 2/27. **Summarized in its memo to the AFA Committee, the HHS Committee voted 7-6 against this initiative; the minority voted of the Committee voted the initiative as proposed.**
  + Full funding for the HOME Fund – Following a joint hearing with the Appropriations Committee, the Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development (LCRED) Committee voted unanimously to support full funding for the HOME Fund in the coming biennium. If this proposal is ultimately adopted, it will likely lead to the Fund’s highest level of funding in decades.

**Bills of note:**

* **LD 136**, **An Act Regarding the Eviction Process**, sponsored by Sen. Scott Cyrway (R-Kennebec), would expand the causes for a 7-day notice of termination of tenancy listed in 14 MRSA §6002 to include the following three additional reasons:
  + The tenant or the tenant's guest or invitee is the perpetrator of violence, a threat of violence or sexual assault against another tenant, a tenant's guest, the landlord or the landlord's employee or agent;
  + The person occupying the premises is not an authorized occupant of the premises; or
  + The tenant provided false information on the tenant's rental application.

**Public hearing held 4/12. Work session held 4/26 where it was voted ought to pass as amended.**

**GA BILLS – Public Hearings held 4/10; work sessions held 4/18.**

* **LD 36**, **An Act To Create a 9-month Time Limit on General Assistance Benefits for Certain Persons**, also sponsored by Sen. Brakey, would limit the general assistance benefits for a person without dependents and who is capable of working to a maximum of 275 days every 5 years.  **Voted ought not to pass out of Committee.**
* **LD 10 "An Act To Build Greater Accountability into the General Assistance Program by Increasing the Penalty for Falsely Representing Information on an Application for General Assistance."** Sponsored by Representative Picchiotti. **Divided report out of Committee.**
* **LD 219 "An Act To Prioritize Use of Available Resources in General Assistance Programs."** Sponsored by Senator Brakey. **Divided report out of Committee.**
* **LD 220 "An Act To Align Time Limits in the Municipal General Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program."** Sponsored by Senator Brakey. **Divided report out of Committee.**
* **LD 221 "An Act To Amend the Laws Regarding the Municipality of Responsibility for General Assistance Applicants Released from a State Correctional Facility or County Jail Facility."** Sponsored by Senator Gratwick. **Divided report out of Committee.**
* **LD 1109 "An Act To Improve General Assistance Reimbursements."** Sponsored by Senator Chipman. **Tabled at the Work Session.**

***NEW –* TANF BILLS – Public Hearings held 4/24, Work Session on 5/4 at 1:00 pm in front of the HHS Committee (Cross Building, Room 209)**

* **LD 33**, **An Act To Adjust the Lifetime Limit for the Receipt of TANF Benefits**, sponsored by Sen. Eric Brakey (R-Androscoggin), would change the lifetime limit on receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits from 60 months to 36 months.
* **LD 477 An Act To Prevent Long-term Welfare Dependency,** sponsored by Rep. Deborah Sanderson– Summary: Unemployed applicants for alternative aid who are seeking employment to participate in job search activities that are consistent with the job search activities for participants of the ASPIRE-TANF program.
* **LD 1017 An Act To Strengthen Work Participation in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program,** sponsored by Rep. Deborah Sanderson **–** Summary: This bill removes all the good cause exceptions that prevent a person from being sanctioned under the Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment or ASPIRE-TANF program– with the exception of DV.
* **LD 1052 An Act To Allow Drug Testing Prior to Providing Welfare Benefits,** sponsored by Rep. Jeffery Hanley– would allow DHHS to require an applicant for TANF benefits to complete a written screening tool to determine the applicant's likelihood of current illegal drug or controlled substance use. Based on the results of the screening tool or interactions with a TANF applicant or recipient, the department may require the applicant or recipient to submit to a drug test as a condition of receiving benefits if the department has a reasonable suspicion that the applicant or recipient is using an illegal drug or controlled substance.
* **LD 1075 An Act To Eliminate Drug Use among Welfare Recipients,** sponsored by Rep. Karleton Ward – Very similar to LD 1052, but would terminate TANF for 120 days to someone who fails to request a fair hearing and who fails a 2nd drug test. Applicants in this situation may not apply for 120 days.
* **LD 336 An Act To Amend the Requirements of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program** sponsored by Rep. Dale Denno–Increases special housing allowance and removes some barriers for 2-parent families.
* **LD 481 An Act To Promote Workforce Participation,** sponsored by Rep. Harold Stewart– Summary: This bill increases the amount of income earned by recipients of benefits under the TANF program that is disregarded in determining the amount of benefits they receive. The amount of the disregard is lowered over time as recipients make the transition to stable employment. – in effect helps to eliminate to “TANF-cliff” for people attempting to work so they don’t immediately lose benefits upon receiving earned income.
* **LD 1302 An Act To Increase Workforce Participation in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program and Other Assistance Programs,** sponsored by Rep. Colleen Madigan– Summary: This bill requires DHHS to administer a program to provide financial assistance to families receiving TANF benefits or statewide food supplement program benefits for motor vehicle repairs, registration, and inspection when the motor vehicle is needed for employment purposes. Under the bill, the program must be supported with federal block grant funding under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.
* **LD 1408 An Act To Establish an Independent Citizens Oversight Committee on Maine's Welfare Programs,** sponsored by Senator Nathan Libby– Summary: Requires DHHS to collect data related to performance measures of the TANF program. Also, requires the Department to set benchmarks to measure improvement and the success of the TANF program. Establishes the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee to monitor DHHS programs with respect to meeting benchmarks.

**Other Bills:**

* **LD 970, An Act To End Homelessness by Expanding Housing Support Services**, sponsored by Rep. Erik Jorgensen (D-Portland), would establish the Housing First Assistance Program at MaineHousing. **Tabled at the 4/3 work session.**
* **LD 832, An Act To Carry Out the Will of the People of the State of Maine by Ensuring the Issuance of Bonds To Support the Independence of Maine's Seniors (EMERGENCY)**, sponsored by Sen. Roger Katz (R-Kennebec), a bill similar to his LD 382, calls for the $15M in senior housing bonds approved by the voters in November 2015 to be issued. The bill would remove the requirement that the State Treasurer issue the bonds at the discretion of the Governor. There are conditions under which the bonds would not be issued, e.g., if issuance would adversely impact the State’s credit. **Senate voted ought to pass by a veto-proof majority.**
* **LD 735, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support the Independence of Maine's Seniors**, sponsored by Sen. Amy York (R-Cumberland), provides for a $50M bond issue for senior housing. This is MAHC’s bill and is the original amount proposed to the Legislature two years ago. It would provide $40M for new multifamily units, with at least one facility in each Maine county, $5M to rehabilitate existing affordable senior housing facilities, and $5M for home repair and weatherization of existing homes of low-income seniors. The bond proceeds will leverage an estimated $75,000,000 in private and other funds.

**Other items of interest:**

* ***NEW –* DHHS 1115 Waiver Application** – The Department intends to submit a 1115 Medicaid waiver application to CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) requesting flexibilities in order to implement Medicaid reforms in Maine. Among the reforms the waiver application requests are changes for “able-bodied” adults:  Work requirements, monthly premiums, eliminating presumptive eligibility for hospitals, co-pays, charges for missed appointments, “non-emergency” ER visits (where the person is not admitted) results in a copay, asset tests and limitations, eliminating retroactive eligibility. **DHHS will host two public hearings on the DHHS 1115 waiver application.**
* **Hearing 1: Portland Public Hearing**
* **Date: May 17, 2017 Time: 9:00AM**
* **Location: Cross Insurance Arena 45 Spring Street Portland, Maine 04101**
* **Conference Line: 1-877-455-0244 Passcode: 7319892834**
* **Hearing 2: Augusta Public Hearing**
* **Date: May 18, 2017 Time: 9:00 AM**
* **Location: Augusta Civic Center 76 Community Dr. Augusta, Maine 04330**
* **Conference Line: 1-877-455-0244 Passcode: 7319892834.**
* **In addition, the 30-day public comment period begins on April 25, 2017 and ends at 11:59 PM on May 25, 2017.** More information on the waiver application can be found at: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oms/rules/demonstration-waivers.shtml?utm\_medium=email&utm\_source=govdelivery