**Statewide Homeless Council**

April 12, 2016

Augusta, ME

**Council Members Present:** William Higgins, Wes Phinney, Sheldon Wheeler, Cullen Ryan, Donna Kelley, Rowena Griffin (Phone), Elizabeth Szatkowski, Rowena Griffin, Josh D’Alessio (phone), and John Gallagher.

**Council Members Not Present:** Jon Bradley, Don Harden

**Guests:** Ginny Dill; Paula Paladino, Brian Marchant, Ginny Dill, Mary Frances Bartlett, Stacey Ladakakous, Denise Lord, Paula Weber

**Minutes:** Paula Paladino, M.A.

**Introductions and Announcements:** None

**Goal Three of Plan: Ensure Physical, Mental Health and Chemical Health:**

Sheldon Wheeler provided a DHHS update on the proposed MaineCare rule for Section 17, or Community Support Services. He hasbeen part of the Section 17 working group that developed the proposed rule. Sheldon passed out the proposed rule and discussed the process that led up to emergency rulemaking which included moving the clubhouse model from Section 17 to Section 65. CMS has a unique billing code for this service which is recognized nationally and because it is a better fit with 65, so there will be no issues with moving this service according to CMS. Also the emergency rulemaking moving the specialized group services in Section 17 to Section 65 (i.e. TREM, WRAP and other specialized services more appropriate for people with lesser acuity). Phase 2 of Section 17 will eliminate the specialized services as part of the technical changes but they can be provided under either 65 or 17 during the interim rule period.

Sheldon stated that the Department is also starting to work on mapping out what an emergency rule would look like for a 120 window built in for a prior authorization through APS. They are looking to incorporate a 120 day transition period to transition to a more clinically appropriate service i.e. behavioral health home or outpatient therapy. As a result of legislative sessions last week, the OAMHS is working on emergency language around this 120 day transitional period so that they will be able to draw out the appeals process so all appeals can be heard more timely and thoroughly.

Sheldon the provided a detailed overview of the Section 17 proposed rule. He proceeded to review the eligibility and other significant changes. He noted that Sam Senft @ [Samuel.senft@maine.gov](mailto:Samuel.senft@maine.gov) is the contact person for policy questions from the Statewide Homeless Council.

DHHS plans to have a meeting with PNMI providers about how to access services for their clients as this has arose as a concern in that some providers don’t know how to obtain services for some of their clients (i.e. fire starters). His Department is currently looking at three issues includes discharge planning, staffing issues and the wait lists for their provider agencies. The department is having some concerns about staffing issues for provider agencies. One of the biggest issues they see is the length of time getting a client assigned to a case manager. Because of the Consent Decree, the Department expects a 7 day turnaround time from referral to a face to face meeting and allowing a 30 day period for determining eligibility for Section 17 services only. This is not consistently occurring, and does not meet the national standards best practices of a 7 day time frame. Another concern is wait lists. While the wait lists have gone down 60%, there are still 347 people on the wait list. This is monitored and measured on a weekly basis. When they communicate with providers they usually discover that the reasons are because of staffing issues. At times, the average caseworker ratio of 1 case manager for 25 people is as high as 1 case manager for 40 people. They have noted that there are about 4 provider agencies that drive about 80% of the wait list.

**BRAP:** Concern was expressed by members about the impact of the Section 17 changes on clients who receive BRAP vouchers. Sheldon emphasized that existing clients will not lose their subsidies. Section 17 eligibility is verified at time of intake for BRAP. Once a client is given a voucher, they are not evicted from BRAP. They do not re-assess for Section 17 eligibility and do not plan to do so in the future. They need to have discussions with Shalom House about existing persons on the wait list and Sheldon would like to say if a client was on the list on or before April 8th, then they should be awarded that voucher. After April 8, the new rules would take effect. This is where Sheldon would like the conversation to start.

In the Legislature last week, it is Sheldon’s understanding if a person currently enrolled in Section 17 and found to be ineligible, they will be given a denial letter plus a 120 day grace period. For some it is easy to submit information to APS but others may not be in service. Once someone is on BRAP they are on it for good, but with current vacancy issues, they often lose their subsidy and need to reapply and this new rule will cut a significant portion of those people off BRAP. Sheldon said that they may need to extend the 90 day period to look due to vacancy issues statewide. Typically they give people 30 day extensions but extend to 120 days but it is taking longer for them to find housing.

Some members informed Sheldon that they were concerned with all of these changes and that the SHC had sent a letter to the Commissioner. Sheldon stated he was aware of the letter and he was tasked with responding to this and the letter is being reviewed. The SHC is trying to approach DHHS with a blueprint to help DHHS end homelessness and Section 17 is one tool to help address ending homelessness. While it is great that homelessness is included in the eligibility the issue is that the major changes for Section 17 do not address the needs of people who are homeless with serious and persistent mental illness. The rule creates additional barriers for those individuals and while this is being rolled out it is clear that the Department plans to make rate cuts for Sections 17, 13, 65 and 92. This is concerning for the provider community because this rule change will make it harder to get the services and the providers are reimbursed at the actual cost of delivering the services. Members would like the Department to approach SHC in a collaborative and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of persons who are homeless including the delivery of services.

Sheldon stated that the current administration has increased by 5.7 million in state general funds for persons with mental illness including homeless populations and this funding has continued to increase in recent years. They have also seen BRAP increase by 2 million dollars in state general funds in the last two years. Sheldon is hearing from disability rights that these changes to Section 17 are long overdue and people with SMI have been pushed to the sidelines i.e. wait lists so he is not sure where the cuts are coming from. These changes were done with an acuity lens, not a financial lens. People who need med management, counseling, and other services will be able to access services under different sections of the MaineCare Benefits Manual.

One member stated 25,000 letters went out to the consumer community and that is was poorly communicated to them and not communicated at all to the provider community. Sheldon noted this and agreed that his Department was unhappy about how that communication was rolled out. Sheldon stated that he thought that people who are identified as LTS are likely to eligible for Section 17 if they has an eligible diagnoses or to Section 92. Access to Section 92 (Behavioral Health Homes) is not statewide and it is a new model so everyone will need to take time to get used to it and make their implementation plan going forward. Wes thanked Sheldon for coming to the meeting and addressing the concerns of the SHC.

**National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) Allocation Plan**

Wes welcomed Denise and Paula Weber. Denise described what the NHTF is: a block grant to states where funding comes from a percent of the new Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac business. The NHTF is administered by HUD and this is the first year it has been funded. This year every state is receiving an allocation, and MaineHousing is receiving an allocation of roughly 3 million. It is targeted to extremely low income (ELI) households, the same as the HCV Program. MaineHousing is in the beginning stages of planning how to use the funds and they have reached out to several partner organizations to ask how the funding should be used and what priorities should be developed. The goal is to have a draft plan ready by June or July. They need to submit the plan to HUD for approval. MaineHousing is in a consultative process and they will have some focus groups to solicit input into the plan and are currently working with Maine Equal Justice to get provider input.

Denise and Paula are at the today’s meeting for their consultation with the SHC to ask what they should be looking at and what they should be prioritizing. Should there be a geographic presence? How long should the affordability period be? What other funds could be used to leverage the Trust Fund? Should there be a priority for certain housing needs groups?

SHC members provided feedback to Denise and Paula on several of their questions. Suggestions included:

* Target LTS, and to target homeless since homeless fall into the ELI group.
* Use the funding to focus on the hardest to house.
* Use the funds for rental housing not homeownership.
* Focus on those with the longest stays of homelessness.
* Take the funding and project based it into supportive housing for homeless.

Denise said that we could do little things or do something dramatic with the funds. A multi-pronged approach is to do a little of everything or something that is dramatic because you can look at making a huge difference. Whatever we do it has to have a 30 year life span. Denise asked what about geographic areas and services? One suggestion was service centers that are accessible where people can walk to. In the past they had assumptions that people had MaineCare that could help with transportation to appointments but we can’t assume this anymore, so it is really about community accessibility and integration. If the funding does not target service centers, then it would be ideal for the developers to identify the town, the services it has and what it can offer. Another question was asked about the per unit costs and whether this should be considered. For example costs are driven up for accessibility and universal design. Also need to work with local community and address zoning issues. Members of the SHC summarized that putting the funds into a supportive housing RFP for homeless would address each of those issues and as such, would be the recommendation of the group.

**Next Steps:** MaineHousing is still in a consultation mode and Denise will be placing information on the website. Paula Weber is the contact and she can be reached at [pweber@mainehousing.org](mailto:pweber@mainehousing.org). They are waiting for HUD to tell them what they need to include in the plan. MaineHousing will be seeking public input according to the process defined for the Consolidated Plan. MaineHousing will submit an allocation plan to HUD this summer with funds becoming available after HUD approves the plan.

**Announcements**

**Reviewed the agenda:** Wes reviewed the agenda and there was a suggestion to add HUD/VASH Vouchers as a topic.

**Review of Minutes:** Josh made a motion to accept the minutes and this was seconded by Elizabeth.and previous meeting: Motion passed all in favor.

**Maine Homeless Policy review including State and Federal Updates:** The committee met and reviewed updates for the month. Please see the attached update from the Committee. Also, it was noted that a letter about Section 17 was sent to Commissioner Mayhew from the SHC. There was a brief discussion about the possible need for transitional vouchers as a result of these rulemaking changes. Some suggestions included that there might be more flexibility around how STEP vouchers are used and that they might be able to be used as transitional vouchers. It was decided to put this topic on hold until later in the meeting when John Gallagher was present.

**MCoC Updates:** On May 4th there is a HUD Forum at the Opportunity Alliance. In the morning, HUD will meet with the PCoC, and then HUD staff will have lunch with the Joint Board of Directors for both CoC’s. In the afternoon will be a joint PHA/MCoC meeting facilitated by HUD. Also, MaineHousing is hosting a supportive housing workshop with Bill Olsen and Christine Roberts from HUD from 9:00 am-12:15. Paula gave an update on the Point in Time and Housing Inventory Chart. CoC Board is meeting this week to plan the CE Pilot and the subcommittee is meeting in the am for 2 hours with Scott Rich.

**Portland Updates:** They are working on the PIT/HIC and there has been a ton of changes that has recently occurred. The City of Portland has informed PCoC that they are unable to continue in the Collaborative Applicant role for the annual HUD CoC NOFA competition and PCoC intends to discuss this with HUD at the Forum on May 4.

**Membership Updates:** None.

**Goal Two of Plan: Adequate Housing Supply and Rental Subsidies:**

John Gallagher presented MaineHousing updates as follows:

* Maine Housing’s QAP Process (Qualified Allocation Plan) on how tax credits are allocated: The Program will remain the same but will be adjusted slightly and send it out to interested parties at the end of May, go to the Board in June or August and then go to the Governor for sign off. John will have some discussions with Governor Lepage to update him on the QAP process so that will allow him to sign off and approve the Plan. The other item that ties to the QAP is the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) and how it might be integrated into the tax credit program to provide supportive housing. John stated that supportive housing is a natural fit for NHTF so we need to try to figure out how to make it work. One idea is to look at the ELI group and integrate this is to tax credit program and also to get public input. If you are interested in the NHTF, please give John or Cindy your information so Denise can add you to the mailing list.
* The **4% program** is going first then the 9% program will be announced. MaineHousing recently put out an old program the land acquisition program for non-profits and municipalities with the purpose of granting money to them to promote affordable housing so if there was land available, for example, MaineHousing could make 100K available to purchase land for future housing development from an affordability perspective. This just received approval and it will be rolled out soon.
* The other program MaineHousing is working on to get some funding for is **Keeping Seniors at Home**, a pilot structured after a program in Baltimore, i.e. adding grab bars in bathtubs showers, etc. to make homes safer. It is modeled after Bath Housing where Deb Keller has instituted this program along with the city and Habitat for Humanity. This is something the Governor is passionate about and it could be rolled out before the end of June.
* MaineHousing would like to expand the **telemedicine program** by integrating it into existing housing so they could invite medical professionals assess these folks i.e. assess their vital and talk over Skype or another similar technology. The goal is to help them manage their medical situation and their care from their housing. MaineHousing is requiring this in new housing and will continue in future QAP’s to require telemedicine capacity in new projects.
* MaineHousing is going to try to add **Navigator services** for the HCV Program as there are some people who have issues in their housing and we want to look at this as homeless prevention to help keep people in their homes.
* Also, MaineHousing has adopted a **continuous improvement philosophy** late last year and so far the Development and Asset Management Departments have adopted it and MaineHousing has recently hired a consultant to help us with this new endeavor. MaineHousing continues to work with the Administration to see how they can continue to do what they are doing, and recently they have been through some annual audits.
* MaineHousing has hired a **new Development Director**. Mark Wiesendanger has accepted the Director of Development position.  Mark comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) headquarters in Washington DC.  Mark has been working in the Office of Multifamily Development since April of 2009.  He brings significant experience in the multifamily mortgage underwriting, policy development, and training.
* **National Housing Trust Fund:** One member wanted to reiterate to John that it is apparent if you are looking at an ELI population, most important thing is PSH and while some of the LITHC projects say they will serve this population, what is needed is also traditional supportive housing that can be covenant restricted to ELI coupled with PBV (project based vouchers) from the Housing Trust. This will work well and help to target the population and will be a way to build up this stock yearly by starting slowly and building slowly over time. John stated that currently, MaineHousing has 100% utilization for HCV vouchers so it is a challenge going forward to make HCV vouchers available for supportive housing projects in the future. The hope is that whatever we do, whether it is integrated into LITHC, we will have more agencies like CHOM out there in which this is their dedicated mission or have agencies that they want to partner with developers with this experience.
* MaineHousing is working with the VA about possibly project basing the VASH Vouchers.
* Bond issue: John has a meeting today with Bill Olsen in the Development Office on what’s next with supportive housing. For now, the 15 million dollar bond issue is dead but it survives for 5 years. As far as word on the street that MaineHousing did not supply them with a plan, John clarified that they did, but it was not an acceptable plan because it called for the development of new housing. Because of the bond, they don’t have the flexibility to create new programs. Instead, it needs to deal with keeping seniors at home and also telemedicine. That’s why they are doing the two pilots and see how they do.
* STEP: There was a discussion about vouchers and the need to respond to the Section 17changes and their impact on BRAP and SPC vouchers and what we can do in preparation for this. One member thinks that the state may run out of vouchers and would STEP vouchers be able to be used to fill the gap? STEP is funded with FedHome funds and HUD has changed the timelines for when the funds are allocated. State HOME funds are our most flexible resource and they have met with Richard Rosen at the State of Maine to talk those funds and it was his department that took 7 million dollars from MaineHousing and putting it into the General Fund. MaineHousing uses state HOME funds as a direct pass through because they see a big benefit of using 100% of tax dollars for housing programs. Richard Rosen is open to future discussions about this funding.

With regard to using vouchers for transitional housing (TH), this is not one of the preferred HUD directives and some communities are losing resources because of this. MaineHousing is not doing RAC is that they found when they put people into housing for 2 years they did not maintain their housing. The one year success is that the services make people successful. When folks have services in housing they are successful. What you are thinking about is a subsidy to transition people to a permanent housing. Right now 60% of our vouchers go to people who are homeless in shelters. We know it is tough but it is a supply issue as well as a rental supply issue. Either you focus on one thing or you spread it so thinly you never make any progress. Is it better to assist 5 people with a small amount of subsidy or fund a tax credit unit for 35,000? With the RAC program the average length of stay was 10 months and this was factored into the development of STEP. The people on for the full 24 months did not succeed. The 60% of people getting vouchers are doing directly into permanent housing (PH).

* John concluded by stating the Commissioner has invited him to a meeting with the City of Portland Mayor in early May. The SHC offered to put together some bullets for John to bring up at the meeting. Wes thanked John for attending and sharing the latest updates at MaineHousing.

**Maine Plan to End Prevent Homelessness:**

**Long term Stayers & Targeting Resources and update of ESAC LTS and Bangor efforts:**

**Portland:** The first list of 70 in May is down to 9 people, with 3 who have a voucher and are accepted into housing. The second list from January 7th (including OSS, Milestone and some unsheltered) of 72 is 43 with 6 on deck for housing. One may be moving in today.

**Bangor:** they have 5-7 LTS daily but they all have vouchers. Village Center has 48 units and will be opening soon. PCHC has 8 people total moving in the end of April and an additional 4 will move in during May.

**Homeless Single Adults (including homeless Veterans):** VASH Vouchers: there was a meeting in Portland on the 30th for the HUD VASH monitoring group who came up and along with VISN 1 to talk about what is working and not working with HUD VASH. Maine is the slowest getting vouchers out in the entire country and the reasons were discussed in the meeting. There were some suggested solutions to have other providers offer the case management services. It was a good meeting and it may help to stem some changes in how the program is delivered by the VA. Some members expressed concern that some veterans are being directed to SPC resources when they are eligible for HUD VASH. The context is what are the most important resource and directed people to that resource the first time. After discussion a motion was made by Cullen and seconded by Josh that “The SHC insists that homeless veterans eligible for HUD VASH be directed to HUD VASH as the appropriate resource instead of SPC vouchers to maximize the limited resources available the state of Maine.” Motion passed with all in favor.

**Homeless Youth Issues:** Jon was not available for an update. Kennebec Behavioral Health is participating with 23 other national counties for a homeless point in time count for youth through Chapin Hall out of Chicago. Preble St. is hiring for a youth coordinator and New Beginnings for a new Executive Director.

**Domestic Violence Issues:** No updates.

**Family Homelessness Issues:** No updates.

**Other Business:** Cullen shared that Yvonne Mickles passed away due to a long illness. She was a tireless advocate and passionate about homeless issues. She was actively involved in the MCoC in years past, the Region 2 Homeless Council, attended SHC meetings and worked as the grant administrator for homeless youth grants. She will be missed and we are all very grateful for her efforts to make a difference for those experiencing homelessness.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

**Next Meeting: May 10, 2016 9:30-2:00 pm**

**Location: MaineHousing, 353 Water St. Augusta, ME**

**Policy/Advocacy Update – April 2016**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

* **The Senate Committee on Appropriations passed its FY17 THUD funding bill on 4/21** by a vote of 30 to 0. The bill will now go to the Senate floor. The THUD allocation is $1.4 billion more than it was in FY16. Of the allocation, HUD will receive $39.2 billion, an increase of nearly $891 million from last year’s level. There are no major cuts and a few programs received funding increases. Importantly, the spending levels in the THUD spending bill should allow for continued assistance to all households currently served by HUD programs. The bill would provide:
  + Sufficient funding to renew existing housing choice vouchers.
  + $57 million for VASH, $7 million of which is to serve Native American Veterans.
  + An additional $20 million to support more than 2,500 new Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers. Additionally, the bill would extend the eligibility age for FUP vouchers from 21 to 24 years old and replace the 18-month timeline for youth vouchers with a more administratively manageable 36-month timeline.
  + $11 million to a new housing choice voucher mobility demonstration designed to encourage families to move to lower-poverty areas and expand access to areas of opportunity.
  + $10.901 billion to renew all project-based rental assistance contracts for calendar year 2017, an increase of $85 million from the FY16 funding level.
  + Increased funding for homeless assistance programs to $2.3 billion from $2.250 billion in FY16. Additionally, the bill targets $40 million to address youth homelessness.
  + Flat funding for the HOME program ($950 million), the CDBG program ($3 billion), and the HOPWA program ($335 million).
* **The House released its FY 17 budget proposal on 3/15.** According to CPBB, the budget calls for what would be the most severe budget cuts in modern history in assistance for Americans of limited means. These programs would be cut a stunning $3.5 trillion over ten years, eliminating, by 2026, roughly 40 percent of federal resources for low-income assistance. Although low-income programs account for 28 percent of federal domestic-program spending (i.e., spending on everything except defense and interest payments on the debt), they would bear about 60 percent of the cuts in the House budget.
  + The budget would make tens of millions more Americans uninsured by repealing the ACA (without putting anything in its place) and cutting Medicaid more than another $1 trillion over ten years on top of that.
  + The budget would cut non-defense discretionary programs and services by *roughly $1 trillion over ten years* *below* *the levels under the harsh sequestration budget cuts*.  Yet under sequestration, spending for this part of the budget is already slated to shrink to the lowest level on record by 2018, as a percent of GDP, with data back to 1962.
* **H.R. 4888: Ending Homelessness Act of 2016** – introduced on 3/23 by House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA). This legislation would provide $13.27 billion in new funding over five years to several programs and initiatives that would provide significant resources to end homelessness in America. These funds are in addition to the annual funding amounts for existing HUD programs. According to the NAEH, the legislation would provide:
  + $5 billion in McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants funding, which would fund 85,000 new permanent supportive housing units, estimated as enough to end chronic homelessness.
  + $2.5 billion for special purpose Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.
  + $1.05 billion annually in mandatory spending dedicated to the National Housing Trust Fund.
* **The President released his FY 17 budget proposal on February 9th.**

Proposed HUD budget items of note:

* + **$18.447 billion for Section 8 Tenant Based Rental Assistance renewals**, an increase from the $17.681 billion enacted FY 16 funding.
  + **$7 million for VASH, a decrease compared to the FY 16 enacted level of $60 million.**
  + **$88 million for new/restored TBRA (Veterans, FUP, DV, etc.) – *New***
  + **$15 million for the Voucher Mobility Demonstration Program – *New –*** Designed to help families with housing vouchers move and stay in areas of opportunity.
  + **$10.816 billion for Project-Based Rental Assistance,** an increase compared to the FY 16 enacted level of $10.62 billion.
  + **$2.664 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants**, an increase compared to the FY 16 enacted level of $2.25 billion.
  + **$950 million for HOME funding**, level funding compared to the FY16 enacted funding level. However, the proposed budget also make the traditionally $10 million stand-along Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program a set-aside within the HOME program.
  + **$2.8 billion for CDBG**, a decrease from the FY 16 enacted level of $3 billion.
  + **$355 million for Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)**, level funding compared to the FY 16 enacted level.
* **H.R. 3700, the Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act (HOTMA) passed the House on 2/2 through a unanimous vote of all present**. It will move on to the Senate for consideration. CBPP explains that the bill would:
* Help address homelessness by 1) allowing local housing agencies to make greater use of project-based vouchers to assist the homeless (as well as veterans, the elderly, and people with disabilities); 2) revising the rules for inspecting units that families with tenant-based vouchers wish to rent in order to get vulnerable families into homes more quickly, while protecting them from eviction if subsidy payments to an owner are suspended because a unit has developed housing-quality violations; and 3) strengthening voucher assistance for former foster children, a group that faces a high risk of homelessness.

Importantly, H.R. 3700 would make these improvements while leaving in place the core characteristics that have made federal rental assistance programs effective. It also would do so without raising costs; in fact, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that H.R. 3700 would reduce program costs by $311 million over five years, with $195 million of that reduction stemming from the bill’s rental assistance provisions. (These figures do not reflect amendments that the House approved, but those will likely have only a modest net impact on costs)

* **S.993/H.R.1854, The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act,** Introduced by Senators Franken (D-MN) - Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Collins (R-GA)-Scott (D-VA). The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act (CJMHA) recently passed the Senate and the House Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. It has beneficial provisions from the prospective of ending homelessness.  In Maine we have always seen a pattern where people with mental illness are swept into jails, as well as homeless shelters.  The people would be much better served and at far less cost in permanent supportive housing. The bill includes provisions around screening people who interact with the criminal justice system for mental health conditions and connecting them with services, at all points in the justice system from intake to transition.
* **S. 2668: A bill to provide housing opportunities for individuals living with HIV or AIDS, introduced by Senator Collins.** Referred to the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee

**State Legislation Update:**

* Items of note:
* **Section 17 rule changes** – **Legislative review** **Public Hearing held 4/1, Work Session held 4/6.** Section 17, which provides services for people with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI), was one of the mechanisms of compliance for the AMHI (Augusta Mental Health Institute) Consent Decree. There are many ways people can present with psychotic symptoms including: Schizophrenia, Schizophreniform, Schizoaffective, Bipolar, and major depressive disorder with psychotic features. It is also possible with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), or some personality disorders. In its proposed rule changes, DHHS essentially chose two of the five, Schizophrenia and Schizoaffective disorder, as eligible diagnoses for Section 17 services. The proposed rules do include a mechanism for including these other diagnoses as eligible for services, but the process and documentation needed is potentially a barrier. These changes could result in many individuals being discharged from needed case management services, and significantly limit who is eligible for services or make it more challenging to document eligibility, depending on diagnosis. In addition to the effect on consumers’ case management services, those receiving a BRAP (Bridging Rental Assistance Program) rental subsidy will also be affected, as qualifying for Section 17 is a program requirement. Mental health providers estimate that services that are allowing consumers to stay successfully housed will no longer be available to, potentially, 8,000 of the approximately 16,000 people currently being helped with this service.
* L.D. 1698, which passed unanimously in both the House and Senate on 4/12, directs DHHS to extend from 90 days to 120 days the transition period for clients now receiving Section 17 services. DHHS also will be required to offer 90-day extensions through 6/30/2017, to clients who can demonstrate that they would be unable to access other programs within MaineCare. Section 17 clients now receiving BRAP rental assistance will be grandfathered under the new rules.
* **LD 1607**, **An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Maine Affordable Housing Working Group.** Became law without the Governor’s signature on 4/3.
* **LD 1473, Resolve to Increase Access to Opiate Addiction Treatment in Maine.** Passed to be enacted; placed on the Special Appropriations Table pending enactment on 3/23.
* **LD 1496, An Act to Support Maine People in Recovery.** Passed to be enacted; placed on the Special Appropriations Table pending enactment on 3/16.