**Policy/Advocacy Update – 2/7/2017**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**FY2017 Appropriations – Continuing Resolution (CR) –**Congress passed a short-term CR on 12/9, signed by the President on 12/10. **The CR maintains the FY17 spending cap of $1.07 trillion and keeps the federal government funded through April 28, 2017**. To fit under mandated spending caps, the CR includes an across-the-board cut of 0.19% to funding levels for defense and non-defense programs. Now lawmakers must negotiate another budget deal - either a full-year CR or final spending bills - to keep the government operating until 9/30/17. Some conservative members of Congress are urging their leadership to enact cuts to federal spending levels in any final bill.

**Every State Will Likely Lose Housing Vouchers If Congress Doesn’t Boost Funding for 2017 –** Under a continuing resolution that freezes voucher funding for all of 2017 at last year’s level, for example, vouchers for more than 100,000 families would be unfunded, a loss of assistance that would be greater than what the 2013 sequestration cuts caused.

**Impact of Fiscal Year 2017 Funding Proposals on the Number of Households Using Housing Vouchers, completed by CBPP:**

| **State** | **Number of households using housing vouchers, 2016** | **Number of housing vouchers cut under Senate bill, 2017** | **Number of housing vouchers cut under continuing resolution for 2017\*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ME** | **11,818** | **-142** | **-579** |

**Budget Relief Should Go Equally to Defense and Non-Defense –** The House may soon consider a bill to fund the Defense Department for the rest of fiscal year 2017, and the bill may give defense some relief from the sequestration budget cuts without doing the same for non-defense programs. CBPP explains that to do so would be to break an essential principle of parity that Congress has adhered to since the passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011. This principle has played a key role in mitigating budget cuts to housing assistance and community development programs.

**HUD Secretary/Deputy Secretary – U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD): Dr. Carson’s Senate confirmation hearing was held on Thursday, 1/12.** In the hearing, Dr. Carson stated he feels that the government has an important role to play in supporting people with low incomes. He expressed strong support for rental assistance programs, public housing, VASH, CDBG, Choice Neighborhoods, and lead abatement programs, and identified the link between housing and health.

Dr. Carson will likely act as the public face of the Department — meeting with housing leaders around the country, listening to local concerns, and celebrating milestones. **Rick Lazio will likely be selected as Deputy Secretary**, who will likely handle the day-to-day operations at HUD. Lazio has extensive experience.

**The Affordable Care Act (ACA): The Senate took the first step in an attempt to repeal the ACA on Thursday, 1/12, approving a budget blueprint that would allow them to gut the health care law without the threat of a Democratic filibuster. The House voted on 1/13, also passing the measure.** This action is essentially procedural, setting the stage for a reconciliation bill. Such a bill can be used to repeal significant parts of the health law and is immune from being filibustered. The resolution instructs committees of the House and Senate to draft repeal legislation by 1/27. Both chambers then need to approve the legislation before any repeal goes into effect.

**Legislation from Senators Bill Cassidy and Susan Collins to replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) would rely heavily on a new type of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs).** According to CBPP, these HSAs would do little to help people with low- to moderate-incomes afford adequate health insurance while greatly expanding tax-sheltering opportunities for high-income people. HSAs disproportionately benefit high-income households because they don’t restrict eligibility by income and provide the largest tax breaks to households high on the income scale. This new legislation would convert current HSAs into “Roth HSAs” – so-called because they’d resemble Roth Individual Retirement Accounts.

**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.

**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:**

* The 128th Legislature convened on Wednesday, January 4, 2017.
* **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 of the budget is 2/21 at 1pm.**
	+ Eliminating the General Assistance Program. (Part ZZZ). **The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget is 2/22 at 10am.**
	+ Reducing the maximum lifetime cap for TANF, from 60 to 36 months. (PART FFFF). **The Public Hearing for this portion of the budget is 2/22 at 10am.**
	+ 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 at 10am.**
	+ 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 is 2/22 at 10am.**
	+ 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 is 2/22 at 10am.**

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.
* **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 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.
* **HHS Committee Report back on the Rate Study for Sections 13, 17, 28, and 65 – Thursday 2/9, 1:00pm, HHS Committee Room, Room 209 of the Cross office building –** A rate study for the majority of community mental health services has been released after a year of study/input from agencies. Should the Burns and Associates proposed rates become final, the following cuts would be seen:
	+ Section 13 - Targeted Case Management: 26% cut
	+ Section 17 - Community Integration: 23% cut
	+ Section 65 - Medication Management PA/NP: 44% cut
	+ Section 65 - Children’s Home and Community Treatment for Master Level Clinician: 24% cut
	+ Section 65 - Children’s Behavioral Health Day Treatment: 10%-33% cuts

If these rates are “final” many agencies will stop providing services like medication management, case management, community integration and others