

Statewide Homeless Council

May 26, 2017

The Honorable Senator Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Attn: Elizabeth Allen & Elizabeth McDonnell

Dear Senator Collins:

I am writing on behalf of the Maine Statewide Homeless Council (SHC), asking that you and your colleagues oppose the American Health Care Act (AHCA) as passed in the House. The AHCA, which would cut Medicaid by 25% over the next ten years, would be disastrous for people with low incomes, especially so for people experiencing homelessness in Maine and other vulnerable populations here.

We ask that you and your colleagues strongly oppose any and all efforts to cut MaineCare funding, including reforms such as restructuring Medicaid into a block grant program or a per capita cap. We ask that you strongly oppose any changes to MaineCare that would remove, deny, or increase the cost of coverage based on pre-existing conditions, as well as categorizing people into “high-risk pools.” This is simply not acceptable.

In addition to providing access to affordable healthcare, MaineCare funds crucial services for people experiencing homelessness, including medication management, case management, and community integration services, all of which assist in successful transitions from homelessness into stable housing in the community. This combination of support, which follows people from homelessness through to housing, works, it ends homelessness, and it prevents far costlier interventions.

When members of this population are not stably housed with adequate supportive services, they tend to ricochet through our most expensive emergency services including police, fire, rescue, and emergency medical response personnel, as well as hospitalizations, emergency room visits, jails, and emergency shelters. Services funded through MaineCare allow people who have experienced homelessness to be housed with appropriate levels of supportive services ensuring stability. It is cost effective, and better for people and communities.

These MaineCare-funded services create pathways out of homelessness, and allow people, some of whom have been homeless for decades, to achieve housing stability. Medicaid restructuring, by way of a block grant or per capita cap, will leave Maine with far less federal funding and there will be grossly inadequate resources and protections for people experiencing homelessness.

These critical services will be cut drastically if Medicaid is converted into a block grant or a per capita cap. Under the current AHCA proposal, Maine and other states will receive far less federal funding, threatening access to healthcare for tens of millions of low-income families, children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

Instead, we ask that you focus on maintaining MaineCare as a basic entitlement program. Please join us in supporting a Medicaid program that ensures an appropriate array of services for people experiencing homelessness. Please oppose the AHCA, and please help your colleagues see how vital the Medicaid program is for Maine residents experiencing homelessness. And please fight to ensure there is parity for healthcare related to mental illness and substance use disorders. Thank you for your leadership on this issue. And thank you for all that you do on behalf of vulnerable populations in Maine!

Sincerely,



Cullen Ryan, Acting Chair