

Statewide Homeless Council

May 26, 2017

The Honorable Senator Angus King
United States Senate
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Attn: Marge Kilkelly & Chad Metzler

Dear Senator King:

I am writing on behalf of the Statewide Homeless Council (SHC), to thank you for your leadership in speaking out against the American Health Care Act (AHCA) in your Senate address on May 17th. Your speech was amazing, and we greatly appreciate your leadership on this important issue! The bill, 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. Thank you for working with your colleagues to oppose the AHCA.

We ask that you and your colleagues continue to 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 not only cost effective, it is better for people and our 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 allowing them to live full and meaningful lives. 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 continue to focus on maintaining MaineCare as an entitlement program. Please join us in supporting a Medicaid program that ensures an appropriate array of services. Please continue to oppose the AHCA and lead your colleagues to see how vital the Medicaid program is for people 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, for taking a stand against the AHCA, and for all that you do on behalf of vulnerable populations in Maine!

Sincerely,



Cullen Ryan
Acting Chair