**Policy/Advocacy Update – 1/2/2019**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**H.R. 2: Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 – *Update –*** Congress passed, and the President signed into law the revised farm bill, which preserves and protects SNAP funding. The original House bill would have eliminated or reduced food assistance for more than 1 million low-income households comprised of more than 2 million people, according to the CBPP. The final version of this bipartisan bill reaffirms SNAP’s importance for struggling households that can’t afford a basic nutrition without it’s help.

**HUD Policy Changes (rent increases/work requirements) –**The Administration released a legislative proposal on 4/25 that would raise rents on low-income people with HUD rental assistance and allow housing agencies and subsidized owners to impose [work requirements](https://cbpp.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=fcb519d4a06d032e8e2bbf63f&id=6638f9a365&e=b7692ad2d9).  According to the CBPP, the rent increases will ultimately total $3.2 billion a year.  Working families, the elderly, and people with disabilities would pay more than 3/4s of that increase.

The proposal would raise rents in three main ways: 1) Tripling the minimum rents (from $50 to $150), affecting the poorest rental assistance recipients; 2) charging households with adults who aren’t elderly or disabled 35% of their income for rent instead of 30%; and 3) eliminating deductions such as those for child care and high out-of-pocket medical expenses. Per the NLIHC, the legislation would also allow the HUD secretary to impose even higher rents through alternative rent structures and de facto time limits.

*Per CBPP, the rent increase’s effect on Maine would be as follows:*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Households affected** | **Average Annual Rent Increase Per Household** | **Total Annual Rent Increase** |
| 24,600 | $600 | $14,688,000 |

**Continuing Resolution – *Update* –** Congress was unable to come to agreement on another Continuing Resolution, and Federal Departments and Offices not yet funded for FY 19 shut down when the 12/21 CR expired. Per NLIHC: House Democrats plan to vote on two legislative proposals to end the shutdown when they take control of the chamber on 1/3. The first vote will be on a [spending package](https://nlihc.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=e702259618becdc3f0451bd5d&id=fe2f6b3044&e=ccffea64a3) that includes six of the seven remaining FY19 spending bills, including those that fund affordable housing programs administered by HUD and USDA. House Democrats will then vote on [a stopgap funding bill](https://nlihc.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=e702259618becdc3f0451bd5d&id=4d05ee8212&e=ccffea64a3) for the Department Homeland Security (DHS) that would last through 2/8. Like the Senate bill, the House spending package builds on the 10% increase in HUD funding secured in FY 18 by providing $1.8 billion in new resources in FY19. It remains to be seen if the Senate, with a Republican majority, will pass either of these bills, assuming they pass the House. Senate Majority Leader McConnell has stated he will add bills to the Senate calendar based upon the President’s willingness to sign them into law.

**Senate FY19 THUD Appropriations bill – No new u*pdate – The*** ***Senate voted 92-6 on 8/1 to approve the FY 19 THUD spending bill.*** which includes robust funding for HUD, according to the NLIHC. Per the CBPP the bill provides $54 billion for HUD programs in FY 19, about $1.3 billion above HUD’s FY 18 budget and $855 million above the House bill. The bill’s highlights include:

* Section 8: Full renewal funding for housing vouchers ($20.5 billion, $920 million about FY 18 funding and $400 million above the House bill).
	+ $20 million for approximately 2,000 new Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers targeted to youth;
	+ $40 million for approximately 5,000 new VASH vouchers
	+ $154 million for mainstream vouchers (VNEDs), a much as $39 million of which may be available for new vouchers (depending upon the final cost of renewing vouchers in FY 19);
* Homeless Assistance Grants: $2.6 billion, $99 million above FY 18 funding levels. This includes $80 million for youth initiatives and $50 million for RRH for victims of domestic violence.
* CDBG: $3.3 billion, consistent with FY 18 funding
* HOME: $1.362 billion, consistent with FY 18 funding
* USICH: $3.6 million, consistent with FY 18 funding.

The Senate will likely consider amendments on the bill on 7/31.

**S. 743: A Bill to Strengthen the United Stated Interagency Council on Homelessness *No New Update.*** 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.

**H.R. 161: Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act – *No New Update.*** 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.

**S. 3503: American Housing and Economic Mobility Act of 2018 – No new update –** Sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Warren (MA). This bill invest $445 billion in the Housing Trust Fund over the next 10 years, $523 million in rural housing programs and strengthen provisions in the Community Reinvestment Act. The bill also limits zoning laws that make housing expensive and includes investment in the Capital Magnet Fund, the Indian Housing Block Grant program, and creates a new Middle-Class Housing Emergency Fund. A summary of the legislation says it would fund as many as 3.2 million new housing units for lower- and middle-income families.

**H.R. 948: The Common Sense Housing Investment Act of 2017. – *No New Update.*** Sponsored by Rep. Keith Ellison.To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to replace the mortgage interest deduction with a nonrefundable credit for indebtedness secured by a residence, to provide affordable housing to extremely low-income families, and for other purposes.

**H.R. 2076: Ending Homelessness Act of 2017** **– *No New Update.***Introduced on 4/6 by House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA).

**S. 2571: The Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (RHYTPA)**. *Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary*. Sponsored by Senators Susan Collins and Patrick Leahy (D-VT). (House companion bill: H.R. 5539 sponsored by Congressman Yarmuth (D-KY), Congressman Denham (R-CA), and Congressman Reichert (R-WA)). The reintroduced bipartisan bill to curb youth homelessness and support young victims of trafficking. The bill would reauthorize the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs and continue authority for grants to communities across the nation to prevent and respond to youth and young adult homelessness.

**H.R. 5833: Expanding Housing Opportunities for Foster Youth Act of 2018** – ***No new update -*** On 5/16 House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA) introduced the. This bill would permanently reauthorize $200 million annually for HUD’s Family Unification Program (FUP), which helps provide stable housing for young people transitioning out of foster care.

**H.R. 5793: The Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Act of 2018** – ***No new update -***  According to the NLIHC, this bill, if enacted, would further improve voucher mobility to help more households using housing vouchers move to communities of their choice. On 7/10 the House passed this bill; it will now be considered by the Senate.

**S. 611/H.R.1511: Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2017 - *No new update -*** This bill would amend the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to modify definitions relating to individuals experiencing homelessness, and children or youth experiencing homelessness as used by HUD to verify eligibility for HUD homeless assistance programs, to align them with the definitions of "homeless" used to verify eligibility for other federal assistance programs. Per the bill’s summary, the amended definitions would increase access to federal homeless programs by children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness. The House Financial Services Committee held a subcommittee hearing on the bill on 6/6. On 7/24 the House ordered the full bill to be reported.

**H.R. 5735 – THRIVE Act – *No new update -*** Introduced by Representative Andy Barr (R-KY) – This bill amends the United States Housing Act of 1937 to require the Department of Housing and Urban Development to establish a five-year demonstration program for nonprofit organizations to provide low-income rental-assistance vouchers to individuals recovering from an opioid or other substance-use disorder. Specifically, an organization shall provide these vouchers through a supportive and transitional housing program that provides treatment for such disorders and job skills training for a period of 12 to 24 months. According to the NLIHC, this bill would divert 10,000 vouchers, or $83 million, away from the Housing Choice Voucher program to pay for transitional recovery housing for people with substance-use disorders. The House voted on 6/14 to approve this bill. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

**H.R. 2069 – Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act of 2017 –*No new update -*** Per the NLIHC, this bill aims to provide housing assistance to youth gaining out of foster care, but provides no additional resources to do so. The bill would impose work requirements on youth as a condition of receiving housing assistance. This bill passed the House Financial Services Committee in a party-line vote on 7/24; the House ordered the full bill to be reported.

**H.R. 1511 – Homeless Children and Youth Act – *Update -*** Per the NLIHC, this bill would expand the definition of homelessness without providing any additional resources for the increased number of people who would qualify for homeless assistance. On 11/14 the House Committee on Education and the Workforce granted an extension for further consideration through 12/28.

**H.R. 6964 - Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 – *Update* –** Passed by Congress on 12/13.This bill would reauthorize and improve the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. According to the Youth Collaboratory, the final bill contains limited reductions to RHY authorized funding levels, however Senators Leahy and Collins negotiated a compromise that dramatically minimized the originally proposed cuts to RHY authorized funding, while securing support for RHYA reauthorization in the next Congress. The original bill would have reduced the RHY authorized funding by $38 million for five years, the final bill includes a reduction of $13 million for two years.

**S. 3612 – Fair Housing Improvement Act of 2018 – *New* –** Introduced bySenators Hatch and Kane. This bill would amend the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination based on source of income or veteran status. Referred to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on 11/13/18. Representative Peters is working to introduce a companion bill in the House.

**State Legislation Update:** Governor Mills was sworn into office on 1/2/19, the official start of the new Legislature. This is the first year of the biennium, where legislators can introduce any number of bills, and the Legislature will be considering the Biennial Budget.