**Policy/Advocacy Update – 3/6/2019**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**Federal budget – *Update* –** On Friday 2/15 the President signed the final FY 19 spending package, which includes funding for offices and Departments that has not yet received full FY 19 funding, including HUD.

**FY19 THUD funding – U*pdate*** – FY 19 HUD funding was included in the budget bill signed by the President on 2/15. The budget builds on the 10% increase in HUD funding that advocates and congressional champions secured in FY18 by providing $1.5 billion in new resources in FY19. Compared to FY18, this includes increased funding for tenant-based rental assistance, public housing, project-based rental assistance, and homeless assistance grants. The bill also provides enough funding to renew all contracts for Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities and Section 202 Housing for the Elderly. The HOME Investment Partnerships program received a slight reduction.

**FY20 Budget & Appropriations – New** – Now that the FY 19 budget has been enacted, Congress will be working on the FY 20 budget, which begins 10/1/19. If Congress does not lift the Budget Control Act federal spending caps, sequestration would occur, as the previous agreement to lift the caps only included FY 18 & 19. The NLIHC is urging Congress to lift the caps to ensure affordable housing, community development, and transportation programs receive the highest allocation of discretionary funds possible for FY20.

**Ending Homelessness Act of 2019** **– *New –*** Reintroduced by House Financial Services Committee Chair Maxine Waters (D-CA). This bill would provide a path to end homelessness in the United States, and for other purposes. This bill would, among other things:

* Authorize $1 billion in funding between 2020 and 2024, for emergency relief grants to address the unmet needs of homeless populations in jurisdictions with the highest need;
* Authorize $500 million in funding between 2020 and 2024, in addition to existing renewal funding, for special purpose rental assistance for persons and households who are homeless;
* Authorize $100 million in funding between 2020 and 2024 to provide outreach and coordination services for persons and households who are homeless or formerly homeless; authorize $1 billion in funding in 2019, and every year after that, for the National Housing Trust Fund, $50 million dedicated for incremental project-based voucher assistance or project-based rental assistance – both of which prioritizing persons and households who are homeless;
* Authorize $20 million in McKinney-Vento funding for McKinney Vento technical assistance funds to assist states and local organizations align health and housing systems;
* Permanently authorize appropriations for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants Act; and
* Permanently reauthorize USICH.

**H.R. 508: Trafficking Victims Housing Act of 2019 – *New –*** Sponsored by Rep. Joyce Beatty. This bill would require a study and report on the housing and service needs of victims of trafficking and individuals at risk for trafficking.

**H.R. 232: Landlord Accountability Act of 2019 – *New –*** Sponsored by Rep. Nydia Velazquez. This bill would amend the Fair Housing Act, to prohibit discrimination based on use of section 8 vouchers, and for other purposes.

**H.R. 715: To amend section 428 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to provide incentives to grantees under the Continuum of Care program to re-house all former members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes – *New –*** Sponsored by Rep. Steve Stivers. Content of bill and bill summary not available.

**S. 8: Preserving Our Commitment to Homeless Veterans Ac**t **– *New –*** Sponsored by Sen. Marco Rubio. This bill would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the supported housing program of the Department of Veterans Affairs has not fewer than one program manager for every 35 rental assistance cases under such program, and for other purposes.

**Trump Administration Proposed SNAP Rule – *New* –** Per the Food Research & Action Center: The Trump Administration’s [proposed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rule](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/02/01/2018-28059/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-requirements-for-able-bodied-adults-without-dependents) would time limit food benefits for unemployed and underemployed people who can’t document sufficient weekly work hours. They would lose SNAP eligibility after three months. Anti-hunger advocates are urged to submit a comment expressing their strong opposition to the proposed rule during the 60-day public comment period that ends on April 2, 2019. You can take action to stop this harmful policy by [submitting a comment opposing this proposed rule](https://bbox.blackbaudhosting.com/WebForms/linkredirect?url=http%3a%2f%2fwww.frac.org%2ftimelimitcomments&srcid=12478635&srctid=1&erid=956267183&trid=dc5e0d21-05e4-4fc9-971a-0d7f32655efd&linkid=143499904&isbbox=1).

**State Legislation Update:** 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.

**Medicaid Waiver & Work Requirements – *Update* –** Governor Mills pulled Maine out of its approved Section 1115 Medicaid waiver that would have imposed work requirements on Medicaid recipients, as well as impose monthly premiums.

**Bills of note:** The following list are bills which have been given LD numbers and will be considered as of the date of this update:

* LD 48, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Invest in Housing for Persons Who Are Homeless" (Presented by Representative BRENNAN of Portland). This bill would authorize a $15million bond, to go to referendum, to invest in the creation of housing for people experiencing homelessness, to be administered by MaineHousing. A Public Hearing was held on 1/22.
* LD 184 – An Act To Amend the Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Coordination Program – Rep. John DeVeau. Referred to the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. A Public hearing was held on 2/4.
* LD 459, An Act To Include Homelessness in the Laws Governing Emergency General Assistance – Sen. Ben Chipman. Bill summary: This bill defines "homelessness" for the purposes of the laws governing general assistance and specifies that a person experiencing or facing homelessness who meets the conditions for receiving emergency assistance in current law is eligible for emergency general assistance.
* LD 447, An Act Regarding the Substance Abuse Disorder Continuum of Care – Sen. Geoff Gratwick. Bill Summary: This bill proposes to provide support for persons with substance use disorder along a continuum of care that includes prevention, law enforcement diversion, treatment, harm reduction and recovery. The bill proposes to provide: 1. Funding for programs that reduce the use of marijuana and so-called "vaping" by youth in Maine in order to reduce the likelihood of neural pathway changes that can lead to addiction later in life; 2. Ongoing support for detoxification as a path to recovery; 3. Reimbursement under the MaineCare program for substance use disorder peer recovery coaches; 4. Funding to the Bangor Area Recovery Network for addiction recovery support; 5. Support for regional 2-1-1 hotlines to offer referrals to persons with substance use 16 disorder for local services; and 6. Access to evidence-based approaches to prevent substance use and treat substance use disorder in rural areas.
* LD 80, An Act To Create the Department of Substance Use Disorder Services – Rep. Perry. This bill establishes the Department of Substance Use Disorder Services as a separate cabinet-level department. It removes from the Department of Health and Human Services, and transfers to the Department of Substance Use Disorder Services, functions and services for individuals with substance use disorders, prevention programs and administrative assistance for the Substance Use Disorder Services Commission.
* LD 195, An Act To Continue MaineCare Coverage for Parents During the Rehabilitation and Reunification Process – Rep. Patty Hymanson. This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to continue to provide MaineCare coverage to parents who are MaineCare members while they are participating in reunification efforts with child welfare. **A public hearing was held on 2/7; a Work Session was held on 2/14. The HHS Committee Voted OTP-As Amended.**
* LD 510, An Act To Authorize Funding for Transitional Housing for Women Veterans and Their Families – Rep. Bettyann Sheats. This bill would provide a one-time $150,000 General Fund appropriation in fiscal year 2019-20 to the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management for the Betsy Ann Ross House of Hope to provide suitable housing for women veterans in transition and their families. **A Public Hearing in front of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee was held on 2/20.**
* LD 613, Resolve, Concerning the Adoption of Rules To Carry Out the Purpose of the Bridging Rental Assistance Program – Rep. Dick Farnsworth. This resolve directs DHHS to adopt rules for BRAP in order to ensure fairness, equity and access to the program for those persons with mental illness who qualify for the program.
* LD 501, An Act To Provide Funding for the Homeless Veterans Center in Caribou –Sen. Pres. Troy Jackson. This bill would provide $200,000 in a one-time appropriation of funds to the homeless veterans center in Caribou. **A Public Hearing in front of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee was held on 2/20, with a Work Session on 3/8.**
* LD 578, Resolve, To Create a Pilot Program to Assist the Transition to Recovery of Persons Suffering from Opioid Use Disorder – Rep. Patty Hymanson. This resolve directs the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to develop a pilot program designed to assist the transition to recovery of persons suffering from opioid use disorder.
* LD 46, An Act to Establish a Substance Use Disorder Clinic at the Cumberland County Jail – Rep. Michael Brennan. This bill would provide funding ($250,000 in each year of the biennium) to create a substance use disorder clinic at the Cumberland County jail.
* LD, 763, An Act To Ensure the Availability of Community Integration Services – Rep. Rachel Talbot-Ross. This bill provides funding to increase reimbursement rates in the Department of Health and Human Services rule Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter III, Section 17 for community integration services to $24.25 per quarter-hour. This would increase the rate for Section 17 CI services.
* LD, 775, An Act To Expand Community Support Services for Certain Adult Members of the MaineCare Program – Rep. Gramlich. This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services to amend its rules in Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter II, Section 17, Community Support Services to include access to services to persons who have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, panic disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. In practice, this would revert back to the previous Section 17 (pre-March 2016) eligibility criteria.
* LD 653, Resolve, To Establish the Task Force To Study Opportunities for Improving Home and Community-based Services – Rep. Janice Cooper. This resolve establishes the Task Force To Study Opportunities for Improving Home and Community-based Services. The task force membership consists of Legislators, representatives of entities knowledgeable about or involved in home and community-based services, one provider of such services, one recipient of such services, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, the Commissioner of Labor and one member of the public. The task force's duties include examination and review of the unmet need for home and community-based services, adequacy of the workforce providing home and community-based services, current systems for delivering home and community-based services and reimbursement arrangements in the home and community-based services sector. The task force is required to publish an interim report by October 15, 2019 and then seek input from stakeholders around the State. The task force must report its findings and recommendations, including any necessary implementing legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services by December 15, 2019. **Public Hearing in front of the HHS Committee:**  Monday, 2/25, 2019 12:00 PM, Cross Building, Room 209.
* LD 866, An Act To Support College Completion by Homeless Youth in Maine – Rep. Michael Brennan, & Rep. Charlotte Warren. This bill requires institutions of higher education in the State to designate an existing staff member to serve as a liaison for homeless youth who are enrolled in that institution of higher education. The bill also requires institutions of higher education to give homeless youth priority for on-campus housing, develop a plan to provide homeless youth housing during school breaks and allow homeless youth who are enrolled part-time to access on-campus housing during the homeless youth's first year of school. The bill also expands the tuition waiver for state postsecondary educational institutions to include tuition waivers for homeless youth.
* LD 591, An Act To Create Flexibility in Affordable Housing Calculations – Rep. Mike Sylvester. This bill proposes to allow exemptions in the calculation of the affordable housing cap for per unit expenditures.
* LD 683, An Act to Provide Social Workers to Persons with Mental Illness to Help Them Avoid Incarceration – Rep. Craven. This bill proposes to provide social workers to persons with mental illness who are in crisis or pose a threat to themselves or others in order for them to avoid incarceration and protect their safety and the safety of others.
* LD 353, An Act to Classify Recovery Residences as One-family Dwellings for the Purposes of the Fire Code. This bill requires a recovery residence located in a house to be considered a one family dwelling under rules concerning safety to life from fire if the recovery residence has no more than 6 occupants and contains a fire extinguisher and smoke detector in each room. This bill also defines "recovery residence" as an alcohol-free and illegal substance free shared living residence for persons recovering from substance use disorder that provides peer support and connects residents to support services and community resources.
* LD 730, An Act To Create the Substance Use Disorders Cabinet – Rep. Patty Hymanson. This bill establishes the Substance Use Disorders Cabinet. The cabinet consists of the Commissioner of Corrections, the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, the Commissioner of Labor and the Commissioner of Public Safety, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court and, at the discretion of the Governor, one member of the public. The initial chair of the cabinet is the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee. The cabinet is established to promote interdepartmental collaboration on substance use disorders policy development and program implementation and support service delivery in an integrated manner. The duties of the cabinet include coordinating funding, conducting long-term planning and policy development, coordinating service delivery, assessing resource capacity, reviewing programs and policies and communicating the work of the cabinet. The cabinet is authorized to solicit, receive and pool funds from the Federal Government, subdivisions of the State and individuals, foundations or corporations. The cabinet is required to submit an annual report to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over appropriations and financial affairs, criminal justice and public safety matters, education and cultural affairs, health and human services matters, judiciary matters, labor matters and state and local government matters and to make the report available to the public. The cabinet is required to carry out its duties within existing resources. **A Public Hearing in front of the Committee on State and Local Government is scheduled for 3/13, 9:00am, Cross Building, Room 214.**
* LD 964, Resolve, To Study Housing Options for Persons with Mental Health Challenges and Substance Use Disorder – Rep. Beebe-Center. This resolve establishes the Study Commission to Assess Housing Needs of Persons with Mental Health Challenges and Substance Use Disorder and requires the study commission to assess the housing needs of persons who are living with mental health challenges and who have substance use disorder, with a focus on the needs of such individuals located in rural Maine. The study commission is required to explore methods of expanding the options and availability of housing for such individuals, including options that support the unique housing needs of such individuals, and report its findings and recommendations to the Second Regular Session of the 129th Legislature.
* LD 795, Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish a Right to Food – Rep. Craig Hickman. This constitutional resolution declares that all individuals have a natural, inherent and unalienable right to acquire, produce, process, prepare, preserve and consume and to barter, trade and purchase the food of their own choosing for their own nourishment, sustenance, bodily health and well-being.