

Federal Legislation Update:**BUDGET & FUNDING-RELATED ITEMS**

➔ **Federal Moratorium on Evictions – Update** – On 12/27 the President signed a package that included extending the CDC’s eviction moratorium. through 1/31/21. The CDC’s original moratorium took effect on 9/4/20. It applies to covered tenants facing eviction for nonpayment of rent who present a signed declaration to their landlords that they meet certain income and hardship criteria.

➔ **FY 21 Budget – Update** – On 12/27 the President signed a package passed by Congress which included a \$1.4 trillion FY 21 omnibus spending bill, funding the government through 9/30/21.

➔ **FY 21 T-HUD Appropriations – Update – Senate Bill:** On 12/27 the President signed a package passed by Congress which included an FY 21 omnibus spending bill, funding the government through 9/30/21, including T-HUD. HUD received \$49.6 billion - more than \$12.4 billion above the president’s request, and \$561 million above FY20 enacted levels, excluding Federal Housing Administration receipts. It largely funds HUD programs at or above levels proposed by the Senate in November, though not as high as levels proposed by the House. The spending bill likely provides enough funding to renew all existing voucher contracts for rental assistance. Beyond rental assistance, the spending bill provides level funding or moderate increases to all programs. The bill includes:

- \$25.77 billion for Housing Choice vouchers
- \$13.465 billion for Project-Based Section 8
- \$3 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants (\$223 million increase)
 - This increase is in addition to \$43 million for new vouchers targeted to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including survivors of domestic or gender-based violence and veterans and their families (who are otherwise ineligible for the HUD-VASH program).
- \$3.475 billion for CDBG (a \$50 million increase)
- The bill includes substantial funding increases necessary to renew existing housing vouchers and Section 8 project-based rental assistance. (However, additional funds are likely to be needed to fully renew vouchers in 2021 because of the extraordinary cost increases caused by COVID and its economic aftermath.)
- \$1.35 billion for HOME (level funding)
- \$3.8 million for USICH
- \$136.8M for Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs
- \$100M for Youth Mentoring Grants
- \$82M for Youth Homelessness Demonstration Projects
- \$430 for HOPWA (\$20 million increase)
- \$227 for HUD Section 811 (\$25 million increase)
- The spending package also includes the “Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act,” which improves the accessibility of Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers for youth aging out of foster care by allowing vouchers to be administered when needed to foster youth at risk of homelessness. It would provide voucher recipients engaged in education, training, or work-related activities the opportunity to extend the use of their vouchers from the standard 36 months to up to 60 months
- \$40 million for new VASH vouchers;
- \$25 million for new FUP vouchers;
- Increases for the Family Self-Sufficiency program and grants to address lead and other health hazards
- The bill doesn’t include legislative language approved in the House version that would halt HUD proposed rules/proposals, including the proposed anti-transgender rule change to the Equal Access Rule.
- It does not prevent changes to the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule and Disparate Impact rule.
- The bill does not prevent HUD from moving forward with its proposal for mixed-status immigrant families – including 55,000 U.S. citizen children – to separate or face eviction from HUD housing.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response – Congress and the Administration have taken measures regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Three stimulus packages have been signed into law, with Congress currently in negotiations on a fourth stimulus package.

➔ **4th Stimulus Package – Bipartisan Emergency COVID Relief Act of 2020 – Update** – On 12/27, the President signed a package passed by Congress which included the 4th stimulus bill. The package is a bipartisan \$900+ billion economic relief bill, which will provide:

- \$288 billion in another round of small business aid through the PPP program;
- \$160 billion for state and local governments;
- Fund federal unemployment benefits at \$300 per week for 16 weeks (into April 2021);
- Direct stimulus payments based on income (\$600 per individual, \$1200 for couples, and an additional \$600 per child);
- \$25 billion in rental assistance through the Coronavirus Relief Fund
 - 90% of fund must be used for rent payments, rental arrears, utilities, utility arrears, with 10% of funds available for housing stability services;
 - Specific measures included to ensure the most in-need households receive support, with a preference for households at or below 50% AMI;
 - Can cover up to 18 months of arrears or future assistance;

- \$26 billion in nutrition/agriculture assistance – including a temporary 15% increase in SNAP through 6/30/21, expansion of the Pandemic-EBT program to cover families with children in child care, provisions to make it easier for people to qualify for SNAP (excluding pandemic Unemployment benefits as income), temporary increase in WIC, funding for senior nutrition programs including Meals on Wheels;
- \$5 billion for opioid treatment;
- Devote tens of billions of dollars to other priorities, such as child care, transportation, education, and vaccine distribution;
- Extends the deadline from December 30, 2020 to December 31, 2021 for funds provided by Congress in the CARES Act through the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF);
- Establishes a permanent floor for the 4% credit in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. This change will make it easier to secure the financing needed for affordable housing projects and will assist in restarting stalled LIHTC projects throughout the country. Advocates estimate that the creation of a 4% floor could create as much as 126,000 rental homes in the next 10 years.
- Extension of the CDC's Eviction Moratorium through 1/31;
- Language cancelling the FY 20 CoC NOFA.

- **Phase 4 Stimulus Ask re. Youth Homelessness – No new update** – There are two dear colleague letters circulating Congress to get increased funding for homeless youth providers. Both have bipartisan support in both chambers. Homeless youth providers and other advocates are working with Senator Collins to get her support for the Murkowski, Manchin letter

-The House Yarmuth, Bacon, Davis Dear Colleague Letter is specifically requesting:

- \$300 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) program, with \$150 million being disbursed to existing RHYA grantees and the remaining funds used to expand services through new grants.
- \$500 million for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program.
- \$2 million for an online curriculum that will train parents, teachers, and students how to recognize the indicators of trafficking.
- \$25 million in supplemental funding for existing HHS trafficking grantees to provide direct survivor support and operate the National Human Trafficking Hotline.
- \$2 billion for a Family Stabilization Fund to provide flexible funding for community organizations to meet the unique needs of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.

-The Murkowski, Manchin, Sullivan, Sinema Senate Dear Colleague Letter is specifically requesting:

- \$25 million for existing RHYA grantees to allow 336 American communities to maintain and expand housing and services for youth and young adults at-risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- \$75 million to fund new RHYA grants to expand services. (Only 25% of applicants receive a RHYA grant, with many applicants scoring high and not receiving a grant due to the lack of funding.)
- \$150 million in supplemental funding to provide targeted support to children and youth experiencing homelessness through the EHCY infrastructure and service delivery system.
- \$2 million for an online program that will train parents, educators, and students how to recognize the indicators of trafficking.
- \$15 million in supplemental funding for existing HHS trafficking grantees to provide direct survivor support and operate the National Human Trafficking Hotline.
- \$2 million for HHS to collect data on how increased unemployment rates and economic and social instabilities related to COVID-19 impact human trafficking, including among immigrant populations, both documented and undocumented.
- \$800 million for a Family Stabilization Fund to provide flexible funding for community organizations to meet the unique needs of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness. – Of note, Senator Collins has lent her support to this specific measure.

- **"CARES Act" 3rd Stimulus package:** The President signed the nearly \$2 trillion stimulus package to combat the economic fallout of the coronavirus outbreak, including direct payments to most Americans and a half-trillion-dollar fund to shore up struggling companies. Additionally, language in the bill included "None of the funds provided...may be used to require people experiencing homelessness to receive treatment or perform any other prerequisite activities as a condition for receiving shelter, housing, or other services." This ensures the integrity of the Housing First model is retained for HUD programs.

HUD funding & funding to address homelessness in the bill:

- More than \$6.5 billion in Federal funding for CDBG, the Economic Development Administration, and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership to help mitigate the local economic crisis and rebuild impacted industries such as tourism or manufacturing supply chains.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – \$5 billion
- Homeless Assistance Grants – \$4 billion.
- Section 8 Tenant-Based Rental Assistance – \$1.25 billion.
- Project-Based Rental Assistance – \$1 billion
- \$450 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Other individual assistance:

- \$15.5 billion to help cover increased demand for SNAP.
- \$8.8 billion for child food assistance

BILLS

HR 7301 The Emergency Housing Protections and Relief Act of 2020 – *No new update* – The House passed this bill on 6/29, which includes a package of critically needed emergency housing resources and protections to help keep renters in their homes and to address the health and safety of people experiencing homelessness. The bill includes the housing and homelessness resources approved by the House in the HEROES Act, including many top priorities:

- \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance;
- A national, uniform moratorium on evictions and foreclosures;
- \$11.5 billion to prevent and respond to outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness; and
- Additional needed resources to ensure housing stability.

State Legislation Update: *The 130th Legislature convened on Wednesday, 12/2.*

- **Prioritizing People Experiencing Homelessness for COVID-19 Vaccines – *New*** – As COVID-19 vaccines are nearing distribution to those at highest risk of contracting the virus, it would be beneficial for CoCs to urge their state health departments to prioritize people experiencing homelessness and the workers who serve them. You can inform state authorities about how people experiencing homelessness are uniquely at severe risk for contracting COVID-19, given the prevalence of risk factors in homeless populations, including racial disparities. The initial distribution of vaccines to those at highest risk of COVID-19 will save lives and reduce the rate of community spread - especially among people experiencing homelessness. CoCs are encouraged to contact their state and local health departments to advocate for this prioritization. Click here to learn more about national and state vaccine plans: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/covid19-vaccination-guidance.html> Click here for Maine's plan: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/maine-jurisdiction-executive-summary.pdf>
 - **The Governor released a [statement](#) regarding the previously predicted budget shortfall for this fiscal year. It appears that by using unspent funds from last year, CARES Act funding, and unexpected increased revenue from alcohol sales, that they will be able to balance the budget without using the Rainy-Day Fund. However, when the new Legislature convenes and they begin work on the next biennial budget, they will be looking at about \$100 million in revenue losses.**
 - **Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:** The Committee continues to meet with regularity, with the majority of meetings focusing on items related to the pandemic and its effect on Maine, the current fiscal year revenue report and CARES Act funding.
 - **Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee:** The Committee continues to meet with regularity.
- Governor Mills' Executive Orders and Programs re. COVID-19**
- **Maine COVID-19 Rent Relief Program:** The Governor's rent relief program, which had been put on pause at the end of September, is now accepting applications again. Eligible renters may apply for help with paying their October and November rents – up to \$1,000 per month. A key update to the program is that every eligible renter in Maine, regardless of what town they live in or whether or not they live in a property that was financed with low income housing tax credits, can now apply through one common point of entry which is through the Cap Agencies, link here: <https://mecap.org/rent>. The only exception to this rule is for tenants who live in Lewiston, who should continue to seek rent relief [through the City of Lewiston](#) because their CARES Act rent relief funds have not been fully exhausted yet. Once the city funds are exhausted, renters can then apply through the Cap Agency link above. For more details on the state rent relief program, [click here](#).
 - **Evictions:** On 4/16, Governor Mills issued an [Executive Order](#) that, when taken in combination with a March 18 order issued by the Maine Court System, will prevent the immediate eviction of tenants other than those who engage in dangerous or unlawful conduct for the duration of the state of emergency. On 7/30, Governor Mills signed an Executive Order extending protections for renters in the eviction process., as Maine courts are beginning to reopen next week. The order allows evictions scheduled before the pandemic and that are unrelated to the pandemic to move forward. The order requires landlords to provide at least 45 days' notice for a tenant to leave, rather than 30 under Maine law. It also extends an eviction notice timeframe from 7 to 30 days.

Bills: Please note that the bills listed below have only been submitted as bill titles in concept form. Once bills are printed, out of the Revisor's office with LD numbers assigned, and bill text/summary information is available, the information below will be updated accordingly.

Homelessness

- **LR 70 An Act To Ensure the Safety of Children Experiencing Homelessness by Extending Shelter Placement Periods**, Rep. Hanley
- **LR 1096 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Create and Enhance Regional Homeless Shelters**, Rep. Cloutier
- **LR 1830 An Act To Support the Operations of Youth Shelters in Maine**, Sen. Libby
- **LR 1651 An Act To Authorize Shelters That Serve Women To Refuse Access to Persons Who Are Transgender**, Sen. Keim
- **LR 1094 An Act To Support Emergency Shelter Access for Persons Experiencing Homelessness**, Rep. Cloutier
- **LR 1540 An Act To Prevent Homelessness Caused by COVID-19**, Rep. Drinkwater
- **LR 1665 An Act To Create a Low Barrier Shelter Capital Project Funding Program**, Rep. Arford
- **LR 1910 An Act To Ensure the Provision of Housing Navigation Services to Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities**, Sen. Curry
- **LR 1680 An Act To Decriminalize Homelessness**, Rep. Morales

Housing/Rental Assistance

- **LR 462 Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative**, Rep. Morales
- **LR 1421 An Act To Create the Maine Rental Assistance Program**, Rep. Morales
- **LR 1158 An Act To Streamline Requests for MaineCare Services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Housing Assistance**, Rep Morales
- **LR 1923 An Act To Preserve Fair Housing in Maine**, Rep Talbot Ross – This bill preserves the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule in Maine, removing the effects of the 9/8/2020 Preserving Community and Neighborhood Choice Rule in this state, in order to prevent discrimination in housing.
- **LR 272 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Invest in Housing for Persons Who Are Homeless**, Rep. Brennan.
- **LR 612 An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Promote the Construction of Energy-efficient Affordable**, Rep. Babbidge
- **LR 1237 An Act To Expand Access to Quality Substance Use Disorder Recovery Residence Services**, Rep. Fecteau
- **LR 1582 An Act To Prohibit Discrimination in Housing Based on a Person's Source of Income**, Rep. Collings
- **LR 25 An Act Regarding Reentry Housing and To Address the Risk of Homelessness**, Rep. Talbot Ross
- **LR 295 An Act To Assist Public School Students and Families Who Are Homeless**, Rep. Brennan
- **LR 947 An Act To Comprehensively Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing in Maine**, Rep Morales
- **LR 1109 An Act To Create a Pathway to Housing Stability for Those at Risk of Entering and for Those Exiting Corrections Systems**, Rep. Morales
- **LR 1346 An Act To Prevent Homelessness by Permanently Establishing the Emergency Rental Relief Fund**, Rep Lookner
- **LR 873 An Act To Prevent Homelessness by Establishing an Eviction Mediation Program**, Sen Carney
Services
- **LR 1420 An Act To Address the Complexity of Substance Use Disorder in Youth**, Rep Morales
- **LR 235 An Act To Provide Services to Maine's Most Vulnerable Citizens**, Sen. Keim
- **LR 959 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services To Increase MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Targeted Case Management Services To Reflect Inflation**, Rep. Stearns
- **LR 1291 An Act To Support the Fidelity and Sustainability of Assertive Community Treatment**, Rep. Madigan
- **LR 665 Resolve, To Ensure Access to Community Mental Health Services**, Sen. Breen
General Assistance
- **LR 1419 An Act To Improve Housing Security by Improving Access to General Assistance**, Rep. Morales
- **LR 1382 An Act To Affirm that Food Seeds are a Necessity in Maine**, Sen. Keim
- **LR 1571 An Act To Ease the Burden of Access in the Information Age for Individuals in Need of General Assistance**, Sen. Brenner
- **LR 937 Resolve, To Reestablish the Committee To Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic Income Security**, Rep. Meyer
- **LR 284 An Act To Amend the General Assistance Laws Governing Reimbursement**, Rep. Brennan
Food Insecurity
- **LR 217 RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Establish a Right to Food**, Rep. Faulkingham.
- **LR 19 An Act To Ensure That Persons Qualified To Receive Food Assistance Are Able To Receive Full Benefits**, Rep. Talbot Ross

Local/Municipal Update:

- **Referendum election results in Portland:** 5 of the 6 referendum questions on the ballot in Portland passed, including:
 - **Question C: A local green new deal (Question C)**
 - **Question D: Rent control (Question D)**
 - **\$15 minimum wage** – with a provision that mandates time and a half be paid during declared emergencies.

For the referendums that passed, the City Council cannot amend them for five years, per the Portland City Charter. Question C raise the cost of development and construction, affecting affordable and senior housing development. Question D will affect landlords' ability to adjust rents, a standard practice as Fair Market Rents increase, and it will also impose a set of rules led and governed by a citizens' led Rent Control Board.