**Policy/Advocacy Update – September 2014**

*Advocates continue to work with the Delegation on the following issues:*

* *Continued support for all HUD funding. Some particulars:*
	+ *Working to offset the 5.1% cuts to HUD (and other discretionary spending areas) enacted by sequestration. These cuts will affect the next nine years;*
	+ *Continued support of Section 8 including renewal of all existing Housing Choice Vouchers in FY 2014, passage (assuming necessary revisions) of the Affordable Housing and Self-Sufficiency Improvement Act (AHSSIA), formerly SEVRA (Section Eight Voucher Reform Act), and support to provide additional funding for incremental vouchers allowing local strategies to end homelessness using deep subsidies coupled with services, such as HUD-VASH;*
	+ *Fully funding McKinney Vento so that the HEARTH Act can be properly implemented;*
* *Funding for the National Housing Trust Fund;*
* *Continuation of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, including ensuring support for the continuation of the Community Reinvestment Act.*
* *Continued funding for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.*
* *Continued funding for PATH.*
* *Continued funding for DOJ grants for DV.*
* *Funding for SAMHSA grants for services.*
* *Funding for HOPWA*

**Federal Legislation Update:**

* **Appropriations update**: The 2015 Transportation-HUD appropriations bills have not successfully moved through Congress. **Congress should restore the vouchers lost to sequestration** **by targeting 40,000 vouchers to vulnerable populations, namely the homeless, people with disabilities, and victims of domestic violence, and renew all vouchers in use in 2014**.

Congress will not want to shut down the government shortly before the election, so passage of a Continuing Resolution (CR) by September 30th is likely, and it will probably last until well past the November elections and into December. Such a short-term CR should have little or no effect on HUD’s housing and community development programs.

More consequential will be the final decisions on FY 2015 funding that Congress will be forced to make when it returns after the elections.  A lame-duck Congress could either enact a long-term CR into next year — leaving the final decisions to the new Congress that will be entering in January — or assemble an omnibus package of fiscal 2015 spending bills to approve before Congress adjourns in December.  An omnibus with final 2015 funding levels would likely have higher funding levels for key HUD programs, such as the renewal of Housing Choice Voucher subsidies.  But the House and Senate T-HUD bills are far apart on many HUD programs (and in their allocations overall), so there is also some risk inherent in a final bill compared with a long-term CR.  How Congress chooses to apportion funding among the bills, as well as within each bill, will be essential to limiting the harmful impacts of what will be a very tight budget at the end of the day.

* **House T-HUD:** The House bill provides $9.75 billion for Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA), a 1.7% reduction from the current FY 2014 funding level of $9.92 billion. This funding level is equivalent to the amount proposed in the President’s FY 2015 budget.
* **Senate T-HUD:** The Senate bill is a significant improvement over its House counterpart but still falls short in major respects. Like the House bill, it fails to restore the vouchers lost due to sequestration cuts in 2013, and, with the exception of 10,000 new vouchers for homeless veterans (HUD-VASH), fails to make progress on reducing homelessness. On the positive side, the Senate bill does provide substantially more funding than the House bill for public housing and for administrative fees for the Housing Choice Voucher program, as well as for the HOME block grant.

**State Legislation Update:**

* The Maine Department of Health and Human Services is asking a federal court to order Portland and Westbrook to comply with its new policy and stop giving General Assistance funds to undocumented immigrants. In a counterclaim filed by the DHHS in U.S. District Court, the state contends it will suffer “significant” and “irreparable harm” if the cities continue to give vouchers for food and housing to people who are not in the country legally. MMA’s lawsuit, with Portland and Westbrook as co-plaintiffs, is still pending.
* The Governor has stated that he will not renew the statewide waiver (for which Maine qualifies and has received since 2008) from a federal requirement that limits SNAP for many adults to 3 months every 3 years. Thousands of Mainers could be cut from SNAP as early as this December and be ineligible until October 2017, unless they are working or volunteering 20 hours a week. There is a public hearing on Wednesday, August 20th at 2:00 pm, DHHS Conference Room 110, 19 Union Street in Augusta.