**Maine Homeless Policy Committee**

Meeting minutes 8/7/15

In attendance: Vickey Rand, Cullen Ryan, Awa Conteh, Ginny Dill, Steve Ellis, Ashley Gorczyca, and Shawn Yardley.

**I. Items of current focus.**

**Federal and State**. The group reviewed federal and state policy issues.

Cullen mentioned that now is the perfect time to invite the delegation and/or their staffers to visit programs.

Steve mentioned that Rajat Mathur, a staffer for Senator Collins for the Senate Appropriations Committee, will be visiting Frannie Peabody Center to discuss HOPWA funding, along with other HUD funding. Steve plans to also speak about sequestration, cuts to HOME funding affecting Home to Stay and LIHTC programs, and McKinney Programs and how they affect people with HIV/AIDS as well as how it slows FPC’s ability to transition people onto other programs (HCV) or find affordable housing for our vouchers.

**NAEH Annual Conference, July 15th-17th:** The Capitol Hill visits went very well. The group had face-time with Senators Collins and King, and met with Congresswoman Pingree’s and Congressman Poliquin’s staff - providing an excellent opportunity to communicate Maine’s policy priorities to end homelessness. The meetings provided a great opportunity to educate the delegation on how the proposed cuts to HOME funding would affect Maine and how this illustrates the need to raise the overall spending caps.

HOME is used as a foundational building block to leverage Low Income Housing Tax Credits, a deciding factor as to whether there is any affordable housing development in each state. In Maine, HOME also provides important rental subsidies and supportive services for homeless populations. The Senate THUD budget would decimate funding for the HOME program for FY 2016. The bill reduces HOME funding by a shocking 93%, leaving only $66 million to be divided by approximately 650 participating jurisdictions. For Maine, this would mean the abrupt elimination of all $4,543,837 of funding, as small state minimums would disappear. The proposed drastic cut to HOME further illustrates the need to raise the overall budget caps. The House THUD bill would cut the HOME program to $767 million, and though this is not as drastic as the Senate bill, it is at the expense of the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF). HOME must be fully funded, in addition to, not at the expense of, critically needed funding for the NHTF.

Cullen walked everyone through the other policy priorities discussed with the delegation, which included two asks (Section 8 HCVs and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs) and six other areas of interest (VA/SSVF/HUD-VASH, RHYA, NHTF, HOME, PATH, and SAMHSA).

II. Proactive Strategies. This group has agreed to circulate Op-Eds for topics regularly. Previously, the group discussed strategizing which to cover when, and how to create a series of message that blend with and build on other recent ones. Incorporate an Investment Focused theme into each of the following topics:

1. Substance Abuse – What happens when you don’t treat it. **Who has interest in this topic?**

2. Prioritize one vulnerable group at the expense of another – that is not the only choice. **Who has interest in this topic?**

3. Safety Net – What are the basic needs of a person/family? This budget cuts (all, some, most) of these. **Steve Ellis wrote an Op-Ed on this topic that was published on May 11th in the Bangor Daily News.**

4. It is a good investment to invest in people so they can do well. (“They” have decided we need to spend more on fraud, judges, incarceration; this gives the idea that people are criminals waiting to be caught.) **Shalom House expressed interest in an Op-Ed on this topic at the 5/8 meeting. Update?**

5. Mental illness – what it means to be psychotic, and how we have chosen to serve people who experience it. **Cullen wrote an Op-ed on this topic that was published on April 10th in the Portland Press Herald.**

**III. What we are for, and why. (Why certain policies can work).**

**IV. Meeting Dates**. The group meets the Friday prior to the Statewide Homeless Council, which is typically the first Friday of the month, but sometimes is the second Friday, at 3pm. **The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 4th, at 3pm.**