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RECOGNIZING MAINE'S CONTINUUM OF CARE

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the efforts of the many organizations that have agreed to come together to establish a single continuum of care for the State of Maine. Continuums of Care are supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to promote a communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. They are a vital partner in the works to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families to minimize trauma and dislocation; promote access to and effective use of mainstream programs; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Continuums of Care make important decisions about priorities for Federal funding of programs that provide significant services.

Prior to establishing this single continuum of care for Maine, there were three separate entities that existed: the City of Portland, Greater Penobscot, which was centered on Bangor, and everything else fell under the "Balance of State" Continuum. While receiving funding to operate a continuum of care funding requires a competitive application process, these three groups have consistently worked closely together and coordinated their means. In 2012, the Greater Penobscot Continuum and "Balance of State" merged together to create the Maine Continuum of Care. Then, in 2017, the Portland Continuum consolidated with the Maine Continuum—achieving a single continuum of care—an effort that greatly advanced the level of collaboration among the member agencies and has proven to be an important step in streamlining efforts and assuring available resources are meeting the needs of those who become homeless. The merger of the two continuums has resulted in more accurate collection

and management of data about the extent and characteristics of homelessness in Maine.

A single continuum of care has achieved efficiencies in administrating the responsibilities delegated by the Federal Government to meet the challenge of ending homelessness in Maine. As a unit, they identify the homeless service priorities and distribute resources accordingly. The organizations and agencies that participate in continuum of care include: Maine's network of 37 emergency shelters serving the entire State; MaineHousing and the Department of Health and Human Services; homeless youth providers; veterans groups; mental health and substance abuse service providers; supportive housing developers; local governments and public housing authorities; and homeless advocacy organizations. In addition to providing housing and services, the members of the Maine Continuum of Care play a major role in several other statewide initiatives, including participating in the data collection and entry for the annual homeless assessment report AHAR, and new system performance measure reports.

This significant merger was a collaborative endeavor involving Maine's homeless provider organizations, social service providers, and State and Federal agencies. I especially want to thank the leadership and guidance provided by MaineHousing, the State's housing authority, and the chairs of Maine's continuums throughout the merger process. I am honored to recognize all who were involved and to thank them for placing the individuals and families who are struggling to meet this basic human need for a warm, safe, and stable home at the center of our collective efforts to end homelessness in the State of Maine.

*With congratulations —
and sincere thanks —
August —*