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January 23, 2019

Re: Introduction to the **Statewide Homeless Council**

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Cullen Ryan and I serve as the Executive Director of Community Housing of Maine or CHOM, the largest housing provider for homeless populations in Maine. Our staff of 12 works collaboratively with 48 different service provider organizations to effectively and efficiently house well over 1000 of Maine's most vulnerable people. You will see me here wearing that hat from time to time – to speak on behalf of various vulnerable populations as part of our mission to provide advocacy on their behalf.

I serve in various leadership roles in working to end homelessness, including Chair of the Continuum of Care Board of Directors, Maine Homeless Policy Committee, and ESAC LTS Committee, and I have been doing this work for more than 32 years.

I wanted to introduce myself today as the acting Chair of the Statewide Homeless Council.

The Statewide Homeless Council (SHC) began in 2005 after being established by statute (2004) replacing the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness and Housing Opportunities. The authorizing legislation was amended in 2008 to expand the council's advisory role and to add additional members to the SHC.

The purpose of the SHC is to serve as an advisory committee to the Maine State Housing Authority, the Governor, the Legislature, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) on homeless matters.

The SHC is charged with providing leadership to end homelessness and providing support to the Regional Homeless Councils; educating the public on homelessness; serving as coordinator of information and best practices for the state; assessing statewide needs; providing assistance to people who are homeless by identifying existing resources and improving access to them; identifying potential resources; and reviewing, monitoring and implementing plans to end homelessness.

The SHC includes membership from each of three Regional Homeless Councils (three people elected from each Region), along with leadership from MaineHousing, DHHS, and Department of Corrections. Beyond membership, the meetings are open so as to garner input from broad additional interested parties. The SHC gathers input as well from the Regional Homeless Councils, and discussions and decisions are also reviewed at Regional Homeless Councils and the Maine and Portland Continuums of Care, so as to have two-way input and involvement from everyone across the state involved with ending and preventing homelessness.

Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness:

The Statewide Homeless Council and the Regional Homeless Council system has done much to bring everyone to the table so that Maine can have a strategic, statewide, non-



siload approach to ending homelessness. To the greatest extent possible, Maine's efforts are unified. One result has been the Maine Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, created and adopted statewide in 2007, revised in 2011, and again in 2017.

The Plan recognizes five distinct homeless populations: 1. Circumstantially homeless single adults. 2. Chronically homeless single adults. 3. Homeless Families. 4. Homeless victims of domestic violence. 5. Homeless unaccompanied youth.

The Plan very simply calls for everyone who is homeless to secure permanent housing with an adequate support network. There are four specific goals:

1. Emergency shelters and outreach programs will provide safety and engagement/support that most efficiently allows housing with adequate support for success.
2. Ensure an adequate supply of appropriate housing and rental subsidies to allow housing and stability.
3. Ensure that medical, mental health, and substance use disorder needs are met to allow long-term stability and success.
4. Ensure that issues underlying homelessness are addressed and that linkage to an effective, on-going support system is securely in place.

The Plan specifies how to accomplish each of these goals. Each population will be met where they are at, and supported in ending their homelessness, prevented from returning to homelessness, or prevented from becoming homeless in the first place.

The Plan is steadily evolving and is designed to continually involve everyone working to end homelessness in Maine - together. It was created by a diverse group of stakeholders from the Statewide Homeless Council and the three Regional Homeless Councils.

An overview of homelessness:

Approximately 98% of people who experience homelessness throughout this state show up in emergency shelters. Two percent or less stay outside or in places unfit for human habitation. Both sets of data are collected in Maine's Homeless Management Information System. Due to the sophistication of the software, we are able to carefully screen data to ensure that people are not counted more than once, and then analyze the data looking back over the course of an entire year. This is done every July and has proven to be effective, as we can gauge the state of homelessness in Maine, and what progress has been made on a year-to-year basis. We can see what programs and initiatives are working well, where additional resources are needed, and discover emerging trends.

In 2018, those trends looked like this:

- **6,454 people were homeless in 2018** vs. 6,373 people in 2017, a slight increase of 1%, but 8% less than 2016.
- Though there was a very slight increase in the **length of time people remain homeless** in 2018 versus 2017, there was been a **17% decrease since 2016**.
- There was a **5% decrease in Veterans experiencing homelessness in 2018 vs 2017**.
- There was a **76% decrease in single adult Long Term Stayers over five years: 63 people in 2018 vs 262 in 2013**.

We are making progress in ending homelessness in Maine. Most promising is the reduction in people who were chronically homeless and homeless Veterans – we have housed the vast majority of them over the past five years,



and we hope to finish that job in 2019. Whether we do or not will depend on us having the resources we need to do this.

In Maine, we know exactly what to do to end homelessness. We simply need resources for affordable housing, rental subsidies that level the playing field for people in poverty, and services for adequate support so people will stay housed successfully in the community where they can thrive. The irony is that we spend more keeping people homeless than keeping them housed. I hope that you will invest in ending homelessness in Maine – a state where the problem is small enough that we know each of the people by name.

More information on the Statewide Homeless Council, including its history, its accomplishments, and the Maine Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness can be found in the attached document.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce you to the Statewide Homeless Council today.

Maine's Statewide Homeless Council

Purpose

The Statewide Homeless Council (SHC) began in 2005 after being established by statute (2004) replacing the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness and Housing Opportunities. The authorizing legislation was amended in 2008 to expand the council's advisory role and to add additional members to the SHC.

The purpose of the SHC is to serve as an advisory committee to the Maine State Housing Authority, the Governor, the Legislature, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) on homeless matters. The SHC is charged with providing leadership to end homelessness and providing support to the Regional Homeless Councils; educating people on homeless issues; serving as coordinator of information; assessing statewide needs; identifying potential resources; providing assistance to people who are homeless by identifying resources and improving access to them; and reviewing, monitoring and implementing plans to end homelessness.

Organization

The SHC consists of 14 members. The Governor appoints six members, two from each of the state's three Regional Homeless Councils, based on nomination provided by the three Councils. The Director of the Maine State Housing Authority is a member. Three members are appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, one from each of the three Homeless Councils. The Commissioners of DHHS and DOC, and the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services or their designees, are also members. The chair of the SHC was originally a representative from the Governor's Office (the current Administration has not kept with that). Members serve until their successors are appointed and qualified. The Maine State Housing Authority provides staff support to the SHC.

[Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness](#)

The Statewide Homeless Council and the Regional Homeless Council system has done much to bring everyone to the table so that Maine can have a strategic, statewide, non-siloed approach to ending homelessness. To the greatest extent possible, Maine's efforts are unified. One result has been the Maine Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness, created and adopted statewide in 2007, revised in 2011 and 2017.

The Plan recognizes five distinct homeless populations: 1. Circumstantially homeless single adults. 2. Chronically homeless single adults. 3. Homeless Families. 4. Homeless victims of domestic violence. 5. Homeless unaccompanied youth.

The Plan very simply calls for everyone who is homeless to secure permanent housing with an adequate support network. There are four specific goals:

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The Plan specifies how to accomplish each of these goals. Each population will be met where they are at, and supported in ending their homelessness, prevented from returning to homelessness, or prevented from becoming homeless in the first place.

The Plan is steadily evolving and is designed to continually involve everyone working to end homelessness in Maine - together. It was created by a diverse group of stakeholders from the Statewide Homeless Council and the three Regional Homeless Councils.

The Plan was created as a living document that provides a blueprint for meeting the needs of all populations over the years as we collectively take action steps to end and prevent homelessness. Everyone involved in serving people who are homeless, including those formerly homeless, will be called upon to assess accomplishments, design and amend strategies, and continue to hone the focus of this plan.

Along the way to the end goal of permanent housing with an adequate support network, there is a continuum of care involving emergency shelter, outreach, support services to address issues and needs underlying homelessness, transitional and permanent supportive housing when appropriate, and permanent housing that is affordable. Support services include integrating behavioral health with parity for substance use and Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI).

The Plan is a statewide effort. Homeless service providers and stakeholders, united and working through each Regional Homeless Council, the Maine Continuum of Care, and the Statewide Homeless Council, have committed to work diligently to implement and improve this plan until homelessness is ended in Maine. Every stakeholder is encouraged to provide ongoing ideas and input. The most effective way to provide this input is through the Regional Homeless Councils or by contacting any member of the Statewide Homeless Council.

Statewide Homeless Council History – Major Accomplishments

- Developed and adopted Shelter Standards in 2005 and 2006 (now titled the [Homeless Solutions Rule](#))
- Worked with General Assistance to better serve populations by providing a 24/7 phone number.
- Created and implemented (ongoing) [Maine’s Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness](#), initiated in 2007, finalized in 2008
 - Subsequent revisions to the Plan in 2011 and 2017
- Encouraged and supported two major cost of homelessness studies in Maine, [2007](#), and [2009](#).
- Developed and helped implement/oversee Maine’s actions pertinent to the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) 2009-2012.
- Initiated and created the [Maine Long Term Stayers \(LTS\) Initiative](#), concept initiated in 2012, implemented in 2013, finalized materials 3/2014.
- Initiated legislation: LD 598 - Resolve, Directing All Relevant Agencies of State Government to Work in Concert with a Plan To End and Prevent Homelessness To Ensure That Resources Are Available To End Homelessness in the State, 2/2013

- Initiated legislation: LD 2569 - Resolve: To direct all relevant state branches of government to work in concert with Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness to see that resources are where they need to be to end homelessness in Maine, 10/2013
- Created the "[White Paper – Medicaid Waiver for People who have experienced Long-Term Homelessness](#)", 12/2013
- Created Maine's [Ending Homelessness Resources Prioritization Chart](#) (which actualizes/directs resources in keeping with Maine's Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness), initiated 12/2014, adopted 3/2015, revised annually thereafter. This forms the basis for our annual Continuum of Care applications to HUD for the most significant portion of our funding to end homelessness.
- Created Op Eds, seven published in total: [Portland Press Herald 4/2015](#); [Bangor Daily news 3/2016](#); [Portland Press herald 1/2017](#); [Portland Press Herald 5/2017](#); [Portland Press Herald 12/2017](#); [Portland Press Herald 7/2018](#), and [Portland Press Herald 11/2018](#).
- Created the Maine Homeless Policy Committee – a joint committee of the SHC and the Maine Continuum of Care, as an effort to tie policy efforts in the state together, 5/2015
- Testified regularly each year on various bills related to homelessness, and fought against cuts to safety net programs. Organized Regional Homeless Councils and CoC to participate as well – 2005 to present
- Created of the [Maine Department of Health and Human Services Blueprint for Ending Homelessness](#), initiated 7/2015, finalized 2/2016
- Provided essential input on the Section 17 rule changes, 3/2016
- Provided essential input on [Maine's Housing Trust Fund Allocation Plan](#), to ensure that the resources be directed towards people experiencing homelessness, 8/2016
- Developed [Maine's Ideal Rental Subsidy for Homeless Populations](#), 2/2017
- Developed Maine's definition of Functional Zero, 4/2017
- Provided essential input from a rural state on the update to the [Federal Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness](#), 12/2017
- Created a policy proposal for a [Rental Subsidy for Stabilizing People who are Homeless with a Substance Use Disorder](#), 1/2018
- Provided input to DHHS on rule change affecting funding for Substance Use Disorder homeless shelters, 9/2018.
- Created legislation for a Low Barrier Rental Subsidy for Long Term Stayers for the 2019 Legislature to consider.
- Helped shape annual data released on Homelessness each year.
- Weighed in on MaineHousing's Annual Action Plans and 5-year Strategic Plans.
- Offered input on a wide variety of Federal legislation through Maine's Delegation each year, including SEVRA, RHYA, PATH, VAWA, HEARTH ACT, NHTF, CRA, FSSP, FUP, HOTMA, LIHTC policy, funding for all HUD Programs and particularly Section 8 and HAG, and other pieces of legislation affecting homelessness in Maine.

SUBCHAPTER 5-A
STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL

§5046. Statewide Homeless Council created

The Statewide Homeless Council, established in accordance with Title 5, chapter 379, shall serve as an advisory committee with respect to the administration and implementation of this chapter to the state authority, the Governor and the Legislature.

§5047. Membership; appointment; terms of office; chair

1. Membership; chair. The council consists of 11 members appointed as follows:

- A. Six members appointed by the Governor, 2 from each of 3 regional homeless councils, based on nominations provided by the 3 regional homeless councils;
- B. The Director of the Maine State Housing Authority;
- C. Three members appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, one from each of 3 regional homeless councils, based on nominations provided by the 3 regional homeless councils; and
- D. One member representing the Office of the Governor, who serves as the chair.

2. Term of office. Members of the council appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House serve 3-year terms and serve at the pleasure of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. Members of the council appointed by the Governor serve 2-year terms and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

- A. Members serve until their successors are appointed and qualified.
- B. The appointing authorities shall fill a vacancy for the balance of an unexpired term in the same manner as the appointment was originally filled, except as otherwise provided.

3. Staff. The state authority shall provide staff support to the council.

§5048. Duties

The council shall advise the state authority with respect to the implementation of this chapter and the development of affordable housing. The council shall:

1. Provide leadership. Provide leadership in efforts to end homelessness and provide support to the regional homeless councils by ensuring access to senior-level government officials and the Office the Governor;

2. Educate. Develop and coordinate an education campaign regarding homelessness;

3. Serve as coordinator of information. Serve as a coordinator of information and communication among state agencies and among the state, municipal and private sectors with respect to this chapter. In carrying out this duty, the council shall:

A. Review proposed legislative changes, system changes and resource recommendations from the regional homeless councils and compile the regional reports into a single statewide report; and

B. Serve as a liaison with the federal Interagency Council on Homeless and recommend any necessary changes;

4. Assess statewide needs. With assistance from regional homeless councils, develop estimates of statewide resource needs;

5. Identify potential resources. Identify new funding opportunities through private and public sources and assist in disseminating this information to regional homeless councils along with available grant opportunities;

6. Assistance to homeless. In cooperation with the state authority, identify the resources available to and ways to increase access to services to the homeless and persons with special needs, identify the gaps in delivery services to this population and make recommendations concerning the policies and programs serving this population; and

7. Review, monitor and implement plans. On an annual basis, review and comment on plans submitted pursuant to Title 34-B, section 1221, and propose amendments and updates to and implement a plan to end homelessness.

Sec. A-3. Transition; completion of terms. Notwithstanding the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A, section 5047, subsection 2, members of the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness and Housing Opportunities on the effective date of this Act continue to serve out the remainder of their terms on the Statewide Homeless Council as representatives of the regional homeless councils of which they are members.

Addendum 1b

SP0916, LD 2296, item 1, 123rd Maine State Legislature
An Act Regarding the Statewide Homeless Council

An Act Regarding the Statewide Homeless Council

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as

follows: Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§5 is enacted to

read:

5. Emergency contact information. The department shall collect from each

municipality emergency contact information for use by municipal residents in applying for assistance under this section. The department shall forward the municipal emergency contact information periodically to the statewide 2-1-1 telephone number designated pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7108.

Sec. 2. 30-A MRSA §5047, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 2005, c. 380, Pt. A, §2, is amended to read:

1. Membership; chair. The council consists of ~~4~~13 members appointed as follows:

A. Six members appointed by the Governor, 2 from each of 3 regional homeless councils, based on nominations provided by the 3 regional homeless councils;

B. The Director of the Maine State Housing Authority;

C. Three members appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, one from each of 3 regional homeless councils, based on nominations provided by the 3 regional homeless councils; ~~and~~

D. One member representing the Office of the Governor, who serves as the chair.;

E. The Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee; and

F. The Commissioner of Corrections or the commissioner's designee.

Sec. 3. 30-A MRSA §5048, sub-§6, as enacted by PL 2005, c. 380, Pt. A, §2, is amended to read:

6. Assistance to homeless. In cooperation with the state authority, identify the resources available to and ways to increase access to services to the homeless and persons with special needs, identify the gaps in delivery services to this population and make recommendations concerning the policies and programs serving this population; ~~and~~

Sec. 4. 30-A MRSA §5048, sub-§7, as enacted by PL 2005, c. 380, Pt. A, §2, is amended to read:

7. Review, monitor and implement plans. On an annual basis, review and comment on plans submitted pursuant to Title 34-B, section 1221, and propose amendments and updates to and implement a plan to end homelessness.; and

Sec. 5. 30-A MRSA §5048, sub-§8 is enacted to read:

8. Advise departments. Advise the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services on issues related to homelessness and other issues related to the duties of the council.

SUMMARY

This bill is submitted by the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services after receipt of the report from the Statewide Homeless Council pursuant to Resolve 2007, chapter

131. The bill amends the Statewide Homeless Council laws to add as members the Commissioner of Corrections and the Commissioner of Health and Human Services and to add as a duty advising the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services. The bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services to collect from each municipality emergency contact information for use by municipal residents in applying for assistance and to forward the municipal emergency contact information periodically to the statewide 2-1-1 telephone number designated pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 7108.

SP0916, LR 3620, item 1, Signed on 2008-04-11 - First Special Session - 123rd Legislature