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Maine People's Alliance
LD 258

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for the Maine People's Alliance.

MPA is Maine's largest community action organization with over 32,000 members across the state. Our mission is to create a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

We do not have a budget surplus. I repeat that—we do not have a budget surplus. When you look at all the unmet needs in our state, we in fact have a massive deficit. However, this budget is an opportunity to correct that. Here are three investments that are especially crucial:

Ensuring that everyone has access to health care, regardless of where they come from

Ensuring access to child care

Investing in treatment for substance use disorder

Closing the discriminatory health care gap

This pandemic has underscored that all Mainers need access to affordable, accessible health care, regardless of our income or immigration status. It is clearer than ever that our collective safety and our economic recovery are tied to each person's ability to get to the doctor or fill a prescription. In this budget we have the opportunity to close a discriminatory loophole and restore health care access for all Mainers, regardless of where they come from.

Closing the health care gap had positive societal impacts. Medicaid access reduces hunger, poverty, and evictions, and improves credit scores. Children are also much more likely to be enrolled if their parents have coverage and parents' health impacts wellbeing and financial stability of the whole family. The 130th legislature voted to close that gap for pregnant people and people under 21. Now you have the opportunity to fully right history.

Supporting child care workers

This pandemic has given so many of us a new appreciation for the importance of quality, affordable child care. Too often the workers who care for our children are undervalued and undersupported, unable to pay their own bills, experiencing some of the lowest wages in the state to do some of the most important work in our children's lives. We also need to invest in affordability to ensure that all families are able to access quality child care.

Investing in mental and behavioral health, including treatment for substance use disorder

Last year we lost a record 716 Mainers died of drug preventable drug overdose. That is two friends, neighbors, and family members every single day. We commend the Mills administration for proposing investments in recovery. We urge you to see them as a starting point, not as the ceiling. We need to expand access to medically monitored withdrawal, harm reduction, inpatient treatment, recovery housing with wraparound services, and community support programs for those on their journey to recovery.