



Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Select Committee on Housing: 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 appreciate the \$10 million in the Governor's proposed budget that will help to build 130 new homes. Unfortunately, low-income families cannot afford most units that are classified as "affordable." Many of Maine's new and soon-to-be-built affordable housing units are based on an annual income that is above what many families in Maine can pay.

We were also pleased to see \$16 million dedicated to the Emergency Housing Relief Fund. That will help warming shelters, lower-barrier shelters, longer-term shelters and transitional housing programs to remain open and operating. That will help those currently experiencing homelessness.

However, this proposal fails to help the tens of thousands low income renters in Maine who are at the margins of the housing economy. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 30% of renter households in Maine are "extremely low income." That means that they have incomes at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income. Many of them have to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent.¹

Don't get me wrong—funding shelters is crucial. In fact, we would like to see more funding to support the 4,400 Mainers who are currently unhoused.²

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition. "Housing Needs by State: Maine." <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/maine#:~:text=Updated%20on%20February%2017%2C%202021&text=One%20in%20three%20Ma ine%20households,and%20at%20risk%20of%20eviction.>

² "HOMELESS POINT IN TIME DATA RELEASED FOR 2022" Maine Housing. 16 May 2022.

However, if we do not address the root cause of homelessness: the gap between what Mainers can afford and what rents cost, that number will grow exponentially. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that between 20,000 and 40,000 Maine households are behind in their rent and at risk of eviction.³

If just 10% of those households become unhoused, the number of Mainers experiencing homelessness could double or triple, depending on the size of those households.

That is why rental assistance is so crucial. It helps families at the margins to become and stay housed, helping households with extremely low incomes to escape the cycle of eviction, homelessness, and housing instability.

We urge you to make rental assistance a priority in this budget. Thank you.

<https://www.mainehousing.org/news/news-detail/2022/05/17/homeless-point-in-time-data-released-for-2022>

³ National Low Income Housing Coalition. "Housing Needs by State: Maine." <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/maine#:~:text=Updated%20on%20February%2017%2C%202021&text=One%20in%20three%20Maine%20households,and%20at%20risk%20of%20eviction.>