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This is a description I have previously written of my experiences as a homeless person, who has suffered immensely due to the lack of housing and support available for struggling people, and whose suffering was worsened due to police. I believe it is relevant to the discussion of where funds should be allocated, particularly pertaining to the value of investing funds into providing housing and support for struggling Mainers, rather than into more policing which will only lead to more harm being brought upon Mainers who are already suffering far too much as it is.

"Speaking as a formerly homeless person... The problem isn't that work is tiresome. The problem is that *everything* is tiresome. You have to carry everything you own on your back everywhere you go, the places where you're allowed to exist without the cops telling you you're either loitering or trespassing are few and far between, and if you're homeless, there's a good chance you don't have the money for a car - whether it's owning a car in the first place, or gas and maintenance if you had the car from before you became homeless - so you have to walk everywhere. Sleep is hard to get, given the loitering/trespassing thing I mentioned before, plus the lack of comfortable/safe places to sleep in the open in general.

Shelters aren't even a solution to any of that, since they often have their own problems that make them exhausting at best and dangerous at worst, and most of them are only open for certain hours of the day, meaning you can't just stay there (unless you have special permission to do so, which usually requires you to be disabled - and by that, I mean "significantly more disabled than everyone else who goes there," since disability usually factors into why a person ends up homeless anyway). Night shelters give you only a few hours to sleep in a room as tightly-packed with other people (who are often mentally unstable due to either disability or stress/sleep deprivation/other unmet needs) as possible, and in the morning, you have to go elsewhere, either to a day shelter (which has the same exact problems) or to a library, since those are pretty much the only places where you can just exist without spending money. Hell, even parks aren't a safe option, since cops will pester you if they think you're homeless, tell you to leave if they think you're sleeping, and cause worse trouble for you if they think you're intoxicated (and they don't know the difference between intoxication and disability, nor do they know the difference between prescription medication and street drugs).

Honestly, the worst part about being homeless for me wasn't the dangers of being out in the open, exposed to the elements and anyone who might feel that I have no humanity, and thus have no qualms against hurting me. It wasn't how much money I had to spend (which I didn't have much of, given that it exclusively came from SSI) just to stop at restaurants along the way to where I was going, not because I was hungry, but because I wanted to stop walking and rest for even a short while, at least until the restaurant owners banned me the moment they figured out I was homeless. It wasn't losing almost everything I owned when I lost my apartment. No, the worst part of homelessness, by *far*, was the exhaustion."

I was lucky to finally be able to rent an apartment in November of 2017, and though there have been some scares, I haven't ended up homeless again since then. But, despite how long it's been, and how much rest I've gotten, that feeling of exhaustion was so deep and profound that it has never fully gone away. I don't think it ever will."