

To whom it may concern,

The EPP saved me from losing my home of 13 years, and brought back the confidence I needed to keep going. They deserve every consideration, and as much money as is available.

In October of 2023, I had a rare heart event called SCAD. Basically, an artery in my heart tore, and caused a blockage leading to a heart attack. Science isn't totally sure why this happens, or what the best method of treatment is, and one of the symptoms is death. Sometimes it isn't discovered until a person dies from it and they find it in an autopsy. I was put on heavy duty heart meds that wildly lowered my blood pressure, and ability to be active, and a blood thinner that made every scratch look like a horror movie.

At this time I was working for myself. I had branched away from the profession I held for 25 years and started my own business in March of 2023. I was very successful, and truly loved what I was doing, but I surely did not have medical insurance, paid sick leave, or any other amenities to aid in the lost time. I had liability insurance. My clients were protected if I damaged anything in their homes, but I was not protected from this event.

Due to the nature of surviving an event like this, paired with the heavy medications, I fell into a VERY dark depression along with the 'normal' recovery. It felt like the volume in my body had been turned all the way down. It was difficult to move, and I developed a pretty aggressive case of agoraphobia. Leaving the house seemed like the most difficult task in the world.

Thankfully, the person helping me with the financial end of the hospital visit also strongly recommended some programs to help, one of which was MaineCare. Once I finally got covered, I began aggressively searching for a healthcare team. I knew that I needed medication management for the depression, along with a therapist to help process what had happened, and maybe a specialist who actually studied SCAD. The one thing I could do every day was call and email. Everyone I contacted said the waitlist for MaineCare patients was 9 months, with some saying it would be a year and a half.

I was fortunate to find a provider in Rockport ME who could take me in February, and I began to properly recover.

Throughout this time I kept trying to go back to work. I worked lightly in November, but by mid-December I knew I couldn't do it, and had to take more time off. I used the entirety of my own savings, income from the business, and family assistance to get through this time and keep the business running.

As it would turn out, it took over a year to 'get back on my feet'. I lost 2024 completely. During all this, my SAVING GRACE was that I had a VERY understanding landlord and management company. They worked with me through this recovery to make sure I could stay in the home I've been in for 13 years. But even the most understanding person needs to pay their own bills, and my debt was growing well into the thousands. My caseworker - thankfully - was connected to

programs happening in Maine, and they recommended that I apply for the new EPP program. It took me a little bit to start the process, because I have a hard time believing that I deserve to get assistance like this. I felt I was 'taking away' from someone else, but they reminded me that if I didn't need it we wouldn't be applying in the first place. It also sounded too good to be true, and I felt like it would be a long process for no results.

Boy, did they prove me wrong!!! The folks who work for the EPP are incredible. They walked me through every step of the process, and made it very easy to get my information to them. We went back and forth verifying information, and adding documents from my landlord/management company. I've been told that the landlord side of the process was also easy to navigate, and the sharing of information between the 3 parties could NOT have been more effective.

The day I received the email saying that my debt would be paid, and a portion of my rent would be covered for 6 months moving forward, I wept big heaving tears of gratitude.(I'm crying now thinking about it). This was a 1,000 pound weight I had been carrying for over a year, and the EPP removed that. The guilt and shame I felt for owing so much money dissipated, and I became a lighter, more confident me. The people in my life noticed the difference immediately. Living under the weight of crushing housing debt day to day does terrible things to the human mind and body. If a credit card debt is overdue, we get a penalty. If the rent is overdue, we could lose our homes and our stability, leading to losing our jobs and continuing the cycle of debt and financial agony.

What the EPP does is nothing short of miraculous. The work they do changes and saves lives, and should be funded and respected to the highest levels.

I would not be able to lead the life I do today were it not for this program, and for that I will forever be grateful.

Please fund this. Please allow these folks to continue saving Mainers and building a better future for our state.

Sincerely,

Alana Woodbury