



MID-MAINE HOMELESS SHELTER & SERVICES

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May 18, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Katie Spencer White and I am the President & CEO of Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services in Waterville, Maine, one of six low-barrier shelters in the state serving adults without regard to sobriety, mental health treatment, or history of criminal convictions. I have been appointed by Governor Mills to represent the Mid-Coast and Central Maine on the Statewide Homeless Council, and I am the Chair of the Maine Shelter Network, a collaboration of Maine homeless shelter directors, and co-chair the Maine Continuum of Care's Lived Experience committee. I also serve on the board of directors of PCHC, an FQHC (Federally Qualified Health Center) that operates Hope House, one of two low-barrier shelters in Bangor and the only one with transitional housing and clinical programs to address mental health needs and recovery from addiction.

I come today on behalf of my colleagues across the state. We speak with one voice, and we ask that you invest \$5 million in providing high-quality emergency housing because HOUSING IS HEALTHCARE and repeatedly throughout the pandemic, we have demonstrated our value to our communities and to our state.

Current state funding is insufficient to meet our operating needs and has increased only 16% since 2017 with no increase since 2021 (see attached). I know of no other business that is asked to operate in 2023 with a 2020 budget. Nor can we pass on these costs to our clients.

Like businesses across the state, our operating costs have increased dramatically. Collectively, our biggest expense is payroll. Our payroll bill has increased by 44% since 2020. This is human centered work and it requires skill and supervision. Pre-pandemic we could hire shelter attendants at \$12/hour without benefits. Today we start at \$18 with a full range of benefits including health insurance, short-term disability, and enhanced paid time off.

For this wage, we ask our staff to deal with the most pressing and painful human suffering. We are all aware of what happens when untrained people engage with people who are houseless and suffering from acute mental illness. We see these tragedies play out in our newsfeeds every day. Every day our teams de-escalate mental health crises and reverse drug overdoses. This work requires grit, humor, and most of all, skill.

To protect and serve this population requires significant training in everything from behavioral health and motivational interviewing to harm reduction and the administration of Narcan. It is not for the faint of heart.

"Providing Emergency Food & Shelter to Homeless and Displaced Persons in central Maine"
"Founded by the Interfaith Council in 1990"

For many of us, 2023 presents an existential crisis. Pandemic funding has ended, and we must find new sources of revenue to replace what is lost while being asked to respond to an affordable housing crisis that is affecting every city and town in Maine.

Working at our current levels is no longer sustainable. PCHC's Hope House, for example, has an annual \$800,000 operating loss. PCHC can no longer subsidize Hope House through its healthcare programs; Hope House needs to become sustainable, or it will need to close.

In Ellsworth, HOME Inc. faces a similar challenge. During the pandemic, they stepped up to a new level of care and have been recognized by MaineHousing as the most improved shelter in the state. Their director, Tracey Hair, could not be here today, but she wanted me to share that she is incredibly proud of her team. Importantly, like us, HOME Inc is now offering health insurance to their staff. Without additional investment from the state, Tracey will have to cancel the health insurance plan.

This is not feasible. It would lead to significant staff turnover, and HOME Inc. would be unable to hire new staff. Nor is this work safely done without qualified staff with appropriate supervision. The levels of acuity in behavioral and physical health of the people we serve have increased substantially and it is no longer safe to operate with low staff to guest ratios or with low-skill staff or volunteers.

PCHC and HOME Inc are not alone. We cannot continue to operate at our current pace. I have been asked to explain what difference \$5 million would make to us. For PCHC, it would keep the doors open for another year. For HOME Inc and Mid-Maine, we can pay our insurance bill and retain our staff. Without it, doors close, beds come offline, barriers are erected, and more people languish outside and without permanent housing for far longer.

Finally, I would like to note that it is likely you have not heard about Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services. That is by design. Last winter, my team and I committed to leaving no one outside in the city of Waterville. From the 1st of November through the first week of May, we did not turn away a single person who sought shelter with us. No one. You can confirm this with Chief Essler of Waterville Fire, or Chief Bonney of Waterville PD. That's why you have never heard of us – we made sure we didn't have unsheltered people in our city. I asked a lot of my team to achieve that goal and they delivered. I could not do it with volunteers or with less skilled staff.

I hope we can do it again this winter. With your support, we will.

Thank you.



Dr. Katie Spencer White

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STATE FUNDING FOR SHELTERS from Maine Housing						
Year	Total Funded Beds	Low Barrier Beds	State Home	State General	ESG Funds	Total Aggregate Funding
2014	949		\$2,350,000.00	\$364,641.00	\$742,261.55	\$3,456,902.55
2015	1028		\$2,000,000.00	\$364,461.00	\$737,817.00	\$3,102,278.00
2016	1108		\$2,400,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$882,030.00	\$5,782,030.00
2017	1119		\$2,400,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,212,939.00	\$6,112,939.00
2018	1111		\$2,407,196.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,205,743.00	\$6,112,939.00
2019	1108		\$2,400,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,251,019.95	\$6,151,019.95
2020	1097	399	\$3,000,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,286,595.45	\$6,786,595.45
2021	1130	399	\$3,000,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,286,474.27	\$6,786,474.27
2022 *	1130	399	\$3,500,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,283,470.80	\$7,283,470.80
2023	1169	480	\$3,500,000.00	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,283,470.80	\$7,283,470.80

2022 Operations Share ONLY - Funding Allocation
10 Million - (ARPA) American Rescue Plan Act - State Funds Disbursement

2022 Operations Funds		\$ 10,000,000.00	STATE FUNDS	
Shelter	(Use previous year) 2020 Bed Count	Plus 1.25% (Low Barrier & Youth) Shelters Only	Bed Percentage Shelter Bed Count / TTL Bed Count	Operations Funds Disbursement \$10,000,000.00
Bangor Area Homeless Shelter - Emergency Shelter (LB)	38	47.5	0.038221686	\$ 382,216.86
Bread of Life Ministries - Emergency Shelter	40	40	0.032186683	\$ 321,866.83
Caring Unlimited - Audrey's House	18	18	0.014484007	\$ 144,840.07
City of Portland - Family Shelter	146	146	0.117481392	\$ 1,174,813.92
City of Portland - Oxford Street Shelter (LB)	229	286.25	0.230335949	\$ 2,303,359.49
Family Violence Project - Kennebec(16) / Somerset(18) Shelters	34	34	0.02735868	\$ 273,586.80
H.O.M.E. Inc - Dorr House Shelter	7	7	0.005632669	\$ 56,326.69
H.O.M.E. Inc - Emmaus Homeless Shelter	25	25	0.020116677	\$ 201,166.77
H.O.M.E. Inc - Sister Marie Ahern House	15	15	0.012070006	\$ 120,700.06
H.O.M.E. Inc - St Francis Inn	11	11	0.008851338	\$ 88,513.38
Homeless Services of Aroostook, Sister Mary O'Donnell Shelter	49	49	0.039428686	\$ 394,286.86
Hope and Justice Project - Central Aroostook Shelter/Presque Isle	12	12	0.009656005	\$ 96,560.05
Hope and Justice Project - Northern Aroostook Shelter/Houlton	8	8	0.006437337	\$ 64,373.37
Hope and Justice Project - Southern Aroostook Shelter/Fort Kent	14	14	0.011265339	\$ 112,653.39
Knox County Homeless Coalition - Hospitality House	22	22	0.017702676	\$ 177,026.76
Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter	48	48	0.038624019	\$ 386,240.19
Milestone Recovery - Emergency Shelter (LB)	41	51.25	0.041239187	\$ 412,391.87
New Beginnings - Emergency Shelter (Youth Shelter)	12	15	0.012070006	\$ 120,700.06
Next Step	12	12	0.009656005	\$ 96,560.05
Partners for Peace	17	17	0.01367934	\$ 136,793.40
Penobscot Community Health Center - Hope House Shelter (LB)	66	82.5	0.066385033	\$ 663,850.33
Preble Street - Florence House Women's Shelter (LB)	25	31.25	0.025145846	\$ 251,458.46
Preble Street - Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter (Youth Shelter)	24	30	0.024140012	\$ 241,400.12
Rumford Group Homes Inc. - NEW _Leeds Family Center	12	12	0.009656005	\$ 96,560.05
Rumford Group Homes Inc - Monier Family Center (Annex)	14	14	0.011265339	\$ 112,653.39
Rumford Group Homes Inc - Norway Homeless Shelter	15	15	0.012070006	\$ 120,700.06
Rumford Group Homes Inc - Rumford Family Center Shelter	17	17	0.01367934	\$ 136,793.40
Rural Community Action Ministries - Family Shelter	10	10	0.008046671	\$ 80,466.71
Safe Voices - Annie Pearl Shelter	17	17	0.01367934	\$ 136,793.40
Shaw House - Emergency (Youth Shelter)	16	20	0.016093341	\$ 160,933.41
Tedford Housing Cumberland St. - Adult Shelter	16	16	0.012874673	\$ 128,746.73
Tedford Housing Federal St. - Family Shelter	29	29	0.023335345	\$ 233,353.45
Through These Doors	16	16	0.012874673	\$ 128,746.73
York County Shelter Programs, Inc. - Adult Emergency Shelter	37	37	0.029772682	\$ 297,726.82
York County Shelter Programs, Inc. - Family Emergency Shelter	18	18	0.014484007	\$ 144,840.07
One Time Disbursement Process	1130	1242.75	1	\$ 10,000,000.00
Monitor Quarterly				\$ 10,000,000.00
2022_ARPA Grant Agreement (02/17/22 thru 12/31/2024) Funding to be used for: Shelter Operations/Shelter Facility/Capital Improvements				