



Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs: 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.

This additional \$108 million surplus that this change package represents, combined with a full rainy day fund and projected future surpluses, signals that Maine has excellent fiscal standing and we have the ability to make transformative investments in our state's present and future.

We appreciate Gov. Mills' proposed investments in affordable housing. We hope that this committee strengthens her proposal by investing in rent relief to keep people in their homes and help them find homes. There are 20,000-40,000 Maine households at risk of eviction and 4,400 Mainers who are currently unhoused. If we fail to fund rental relief and a living wage, the number of unhoused Mainers is likely to double.

We were hopeful that Governor Mills' change package would reverse her earlier cuts to General Assistance (GA). While it does provide funding, it maintains those cuts and further restricts GA, hurting those struggling to stay housed. While it restores funding for child care, it does so by taking money carefully designated for child care workers and families and instead giving it to the owners of child care centers to use at their discretion. It also fails to reverse her cuts to food stamps and the Medicare Savings Program, hurting the food insecure and older Mainers. We ask this committee to reject those cuts, which punish the most vulnerable Mainers.

In addition to making harmful cuts, this budget continues to set aside an additional \$107 million while the rainy day fund is at its statutory limit. While families are struggling to afford housing, child care, and health care and Maine has incredibly strong fiscal standing, this overflow fund feels unresponsive to the realities that Mainers face. This is not a time to be squirreling away additional funds. This is the time to fund real, lasting solutions to these crises.

With an even higher surplus than expected, we have the ability to build a brighter future for Maine, one in which everyone can afford housing, child care, and health care and where teachers and other public workers receive the fair pay they deserve for their work. We can build a Maine in which no one goes hungry and people have access to behavioral health care and treatment for substance use disorder. This vision is within reach. Now is the time to deliver for Maine. Thank you.