



QUESTIONS FOR WORK SESSION

TO: HHS Committee
FROM: Erik Jorgensen / MaineHousing
RE: LD 475 – FUSE BILL

3/26/21

Q: Senator Baldacci: What will happen to the people who are currently living in the [Bangor] Ramada once the money to house people in hotels runs out?

A: We expect that the current and future funds from the Federal government will do several things. First, the funding that pays to house people in hotel rooms is expected to remain available past the original deadline of this spring, through the summer at least. That's important as there will not be a sudden day when those folks lose their housing.

MaineHousing has initiated a Rapid ReHousing effort being administered by PCHC that specifically targets housing at least 40 households currently staying at the Ramada. That program includes rental assistance and landlord incentives to engage landlords in working with us to house folks.

Secondly, the funding is going to allow shelters across the state to operate better, with more up-to-date best practices, such as serving their guests 24/7 instead of just emptying their guests onto the streets. The funding will also include more housing vouchers to move people into permanent housing as well as new housing stability services, all of which help that population.

Finally, the federal money will provide, in addition to short term relief, opportunities for long-term change, as local organizations should be able to receive grants to purchase buildings that can be converted into long-term housing. We are still waiting on specific guidance about the rules around how that money can be used, but an initial read of the American Rescue Act indicates that the money might be used, for example, to purchase hotels.

Q: Rep. Craven: Why was Lewiston not included in the projects you talked about?

A: We recognize that Lewiston has an urgent homelessness problem. There is, as you know, no publicly funded emergency shelter for individuals and families there. There are private religious shelters, as well as a youth shelter and a DV shelter that we do fund. We did ensure that the folks leaving the initial Wellness Shelter that was set up at the Armory all had a housing plan before the shelter closed.

Since the projects I talked about were a pilot done in conjunction with public shelters, they occurred where they did. It was not about excluding Lewiston, but using resources that were in place and available to us.