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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 475 Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative

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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we support LD 475 Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies (CAAs) deliver programs and services for people with low- and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the current rental relief program; Head Start and more.

If the last year has taught us only one lesson, it is that comprehensive, coordinated programs work. When homeless shelters needed to increase the distance between guests, we opened wellness centers in Presque Isle and Lewiston and assisted with the new Portland shelter. We found what we expected to: people in those wellness centers lives improved dramatically. At those centers they had access to a larger, more private space so they could think, be quiet and concentrate. They had access to case management and mental health counseling, job training, food and personal safety. One guest in Presque Isle was able to return to work and is no longer homeless.

But we don't need to wait for someone to become homeless to provide them with the services we have. Right now, the Emergency Rental Assistance program includes a provision for "housing stability," which means people who are at risk for homelessness have access to case management, which in turn gives them access to other programs that we have in the Community Action network and with our partners. This is a model for what this bill envisions.

When I testified in support of this bill last year, I said we could do this. Now, we have a year of doing it to prove that it works. We can head off homelessness; we can get people the medical, mental and daily living supports they need. To do so in this more formal way will lead to even better coordination and streamlined program execution.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.

Respectfully Submitted,

[Megan Hannan](#)
Executive Director