

Katherine Blodgett
South Portland

As a social worker that works and lives in Portland, Maine; we need to do more to support the most vulnerable people in this State. Since March 2020, social services have become limited; leaving unhoused individuals with few options to access indoor spaces; waiting rooms, rest rooms and soup kitchens have closed their doors. Many social service agencies have moved to working remotely to connect with their clients. While this works for some; the majority of individuals in need cannot access remote/telehealth services. Since March 2020, we have seen an increase in untimely deaths of unsheltered individuals. Summer 2020 showed the highest number of individuals sleeping outside unsheltered out of fear of contracting Covid-19 at congested shelters. Many shelters across the state need support during this pandemic as roles shift. Speaking for Portland shelters, many people are fearful of utilizing these services because of Covid-19 and the general lack of staffing and support to monitor the increased number of individuals. We must do more to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities across the State.