

**LD 1300 An Act To Require County Governments To Coordinate with Municipalities To Create Plans To Address Homelessness**

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government  
From: Lynne Caswell, Esq., Legislative Analyst  
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*electronic  
record*

<http://legislature.maine.gov/ctl/SLG/04-16-2021?panel=0&time=0&sortdir=0&sortby=2>

**SUMMARY**

This bill adds a new section of law into Title 30-A, Article 5, County Commissioner: Powers and Duties. It requires the county commissioners of each county, in consultation and coordination with the Statewide Homeless Council, regional homeless councils and the municipalities in the county, to develop and implement a plan with protocols to address homelessness within the county. The plan's purpose is to provide guidance to municipalities and residents to assist persons experiencing homelessness and preventing homelessness. It must be specific as to issues and nature of homelessness in the county, the resources available to address these issues and the steps necessary to further the plan. The plan must be published and publicly available

**TESTIMONY\***

**Sponsor:** Representative Supica

- Homelessness has increased due to pandemic; it increases during certain times of the year; certain communities are a draw for homeless populations due to availability of services
- Failure to address this issue is “grossly inhumane”
- Bill bridges the gap with municipalities, counties, regional councils and statewide efforts

**Proponents:** MMA by Rebecca Graham; State Housing Authority by Erik Jorgensen, Director; Community Housing of Maine (CHOM) by Cullen Ryan; Maine Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services by Malory Shaughnessy; City of Bangor by Orinad Folger

- Current homeless response system is ineffective and overly burdensome to service center communities – county level approach is needed
- Adds critical middle level of government participation
- County assessment touches all communities
- Role in funding a more regionalized care system
- Ensure degree of flexibility in recognition of difference needs among 16 counties
- Oversight mechanism should be added
- Add funds to support this state mandate – it's important
- Certain communities are a draw for homeless populations due to availability of services
- MSHA receives state and federal funds to support homelessness and low-income housing needs
- Service center communities bear the brunt of homelessness problem

\* The section is not intended to reflect all comments and may include unintentionally errors.

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**Opponents:** none

**NFNA:** none

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

This bill creates a state mandate as it requires county commissioners to develop and publish a plan.

Statewide Homeless Council is established in Title 30-A, chapter 202 – See Attachment A for bill text

**FISCAL IMPACT - Preliminary (OFPR)**

None provided as of this date.

This is likely a state mandate as it requires county commissioners develop a county plan

**TITLE 30- A**  
**CHAPTER 202**  
**AFFORDABLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP**  
**SUBCHAPTER 5-A**  
**STATEWIDE HOMELESS COUNCIL**

**§5046. Statewide Homeless Council created**

The Statewide Homeless Council, established in accordance with Title 5, chapter 379, shall serve as an advisory committee with respect to the administration and implementation of this chapter to the state authority, the Governor and the Legislature.

**§5047. Membership; appointment; terms of office; chair**

**1. Membership; chair.** The council consists of 14 members appointed as follows:

- A. Six members appointed by the Governor, 2 from each of 3 regional homeless councils, based on nominations provided by the 3 regional homeless councils;
- B. The Director of the Maine State Housing Authority or the director's designee;
- C. Three members appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, one from each of 3 regional homeless councils, based on nominations provided by the 3 regional homeless councils;
- D. One member representing the Office of the Governor, who serves as the chair;
- E. The Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee;
- F. The Commissioner of Corrections or the commissioner's designee; and
- G. The Director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services or the director's designee.

**2. Term of office.** Members of the council appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House serve 3-year terms and serve at the pleasure of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. Members of the council appointed by the Governor serve 2-year terms and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

- A. Members serve until their successors are appointed and qualified.
- B. The appointing authorities shall fill a vacancy for the balance of an unexpired term in the same manner as the appointment was originally filled, except as otherwise provided.

**3. Staff.** The state authority shall provide staff support to the council.

**§5048. Duties**

The council shall advise the state authority with respect to the implementation of this chapter and the development of affordable housing. The council shall:

- 1. Provide leadership.** Provide leadership in efforts to end homelessness and provide support to the regional homeless councils by ensuring access to senior-level government officials and the Office of the Governor;
- 2. Educate.** Develop and coordinate an education campaign regarding homelessness;
- 3. Serve as coordinator of information.** Serve as a coordinator of information and communication among state agencies and among the state, municipal and private sectors with respect to this chapter. In carrying out this duty, the council shall:

- A. Review proposed legislative changes, system changes and resource recommendations from the regional homeless councils and compile the regional reports into a single statewide report; and
- B. Serve as a liaison with the federal Interagency Council on Homeless and recommend any necessary changes;

**4. Assess statewide needs.** With assistance from regional homeless councils, develop estimates of statewide resource needs;

**5. Identify potential resources.** Identify new funding opportunities through private and public sources and assist in disseminating this information to regional homeless councils along with available grant opportunities;

**6. Assistance to homeless.** In cooperation with the state authority, identify the resources available to and ways to increase access to services to the homeless and persons with special needs, identify the gaps in delivery services to this population and make recommendations concerning the policies and programs serving this population;

**7. Review, monitor and implement plans.** On an annual basis, review and comment on plans submitted pursuant to Title 34-B, section 1221 and propose amendments and updates to and implement a plan to end homelessness;

**8. Advise departments.** Advise the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services on issues related to homelessness and other issues related to the duties of the council; and

**9. Develop strategic plan regarding homelessness among veterans.** Develop strategies to enhance coordination and communication among agencies and organizations that provide services that seek to place veterans in permanent housing and that seek to improve access to services known to support housing stability for veterans who are experiencing homelessness or veterans who are at risk of homelessness. The council shall develop and periodically review a strategic plan that:

- A. Establishes a baseline for homelessness in the State from which improvements can be measured. In determining the baseline, the council is not required to use the federal definition of homelessness and may include levels of housing instability or ranges of homelessness;
- B. Develops a method of measuring homelessness among veterans in the State to demonstrate whether efforts to reduce the number of homeless veterans in the State have been successful;
- C. Identifies specific processes for improving communication among agencies that provide services to veterans, including services unrelated to homelessness, that will facilitate identification of veterans in need of housing assistance or veterans who may be at risk of homelessness and maximize resources available to address homelessness among veterans; and [
- D. Develops a framework and timeline for determining progress of communication and coordination efforts targeting homelessness among veterans and the effectiveness of those efforts in reducing homelessness among veterans.

The Director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services shall periodically report to the council regarding the progress of implementing the strategies described in this subsection. Beginning February 1, 2018, the director shall report annually to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs on the implementation of the strategic plan. The report must include, but is not limited to, the effect of the strategic plan on homelessness among veterans based on the measurements required to be established by this subsection.