## Recommendation for Housing Assistance

1. **Which subcommittee is submitting this recommendation?**
   
   Health Care, Nonprofits, Child Care and Support Services

2. **Please list the other subcommittees that support this recommendation:**

3. **Which sector does this recommendation support?**

   This recommendation supports the housing sector and people struggling to pay their rents during the pandemic.

### What is the recommendation?

We recommend building a robust statewide housing assistance program. The housing assistance program should include:

- **a rental assistance program to ensure that tenants with insufficient income can get the assistance they need to pay their rent.**
  - This program would provide graduated assistance based on household size and income based on area median income (AMI). The amount of assistance would cover the balance between a household's ability to pay and the amount they owe in rent and utilities.
  - Landlords should be able to apply directly for assistance with tenants’ consent.
  - Assistance payments should be provided directly to the landlord and provided in a timely manner, ideally 5 days following the date of application.
  - Applications should be translated and available in multiple languages.
  - Assistance should be provided for multiple months. Ideally for as long as households remain eligible through the end of 2020.

- **a rapid re-housing program for the homeless to support people experiencing homelessness to obtain immediate shelter and to assist individuals experiencing homelessness to move from shelters, welcome centers, motels, and temporary housing to permanent housing.**

- **an eviction prevention program to provide legal and rental assistance to households facing immediate risk of homelessness to remain housed and to connect those households with the resources necessary to maintain permanent housing.**
  - Applications for assistance and a determination of eligibility will occur at court on the date of the tenant’s eviction court date.
  - This program should be administered by certified housing counselors.

4. **Is this a quick-start, July 15 or Dec 1 recommendation?**

   This is a July 15 recommendation.

5. **What are the benefits of this recommendation?**
This proposal will support landlords by helping tenants to meet their rents, keep tens of thousands of people in the state housed during this public emergency and support people experiencing homelessness to retain permanent housing, thus relieving pressures on our already stretched homeless shelters.

Even before the current public health emergency there was an affordable housing crisis in many parts of this State. The high rates of unemployment have exacerbated this problem as more people struggle to make ends meet. In a recent survey by the Census Bureau, more than 45,000 individuals in Maine during the week of June 11 through June 16 reported that they were unable to pay last month’s rent.

With funds for housing assistance expected to run out in July, the $600 per week UI benefit slated to stop at the end of July and the Governor’s Executive Order preventing evictions scheduled to expire on August 3rd, this proposal will be essential to address the looming cliff for struggling Mainers across the state.

6. How much would this recommendation cost to implement?

We estimate needing $50 million to truly meet the needs across the state.

- $5 million for the rapid rehousing program for the homeless.
  - Preble Street runs a successful rapid rehousing program for veterans at a cost of $2.1 million per year. To expand this program to homeless individuals statewide through the end of 2020 would cost approximately $5 million.

- $45 million for the rental assistance program and the eviction prevention program.
  - More than 12,000 households applied for assistance through MaineHousing rental relief program that provided a one-time $500 rental payment. This payment was an extremely helpful benefit, but in most parts of the state, it did not meet the fair market rents of the area and likely a significant number of households struggled to pay their rents in future months.

In 2020 the average fair market rent in the State of Maine for a 2-bedroom apartment is $849 per month, ranging from $714 per month in Presque Isle to $1,516 per month in Portland. Many families will need assistance for multiple months while others may just need help with one month’s rent.

At $45 million, each month, MaineHousing would be able to provide an average benefit of $750 to 12,000 households from August 1 through the end of 2020.

7. When should implementation begin and when is an outcome realized?

This program should be implemented as soon as possible. Funding could be provided to MaineHousing to oversee and These programs could be overseen by MaineHousing who should seek quick input from key stakeholders as they design the programming. MaineHousing oversaw and administered the Governor’s rental assistance program
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Will any populations, communities, or industries be disadvantaged by this recommendation?</td>
<td>We do not believe that any others will be disadvantaged by this recommendation.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Is there an existing model for this, in or outside of Maine?</td>
<td>Yes, a number of states, including Vermont, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Montana, are using Coronavirus Relief Funds to fund housing assistance programs.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>What additional data or information is needed, if any?</td>
<td>We urge MaineHousing to closely track participation in the rental assistance program by town. It is important to understand the need for affordable housing at the municipality level. Subcommittee members would like to be able to compare participation numbers in this program with General Assistance usage by town.</td>
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<td>What else should be considered to evaluate this recommendation?</td>
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