



The Truth About Solving Homelessness: We need more of everything

I am often asked why we are failing in our response to homelessness.

The answer is simple.

We don't invest in the solutions we know will work for the populations that need them at the rate at which it is required.

A narrow focus won't work. Take "LD2", a key piece of legislation from this last session. Sponsored by Speaker of the House Rachel Talbot Ross and funded by Governor Mills' budget, it aims to produce some of the 400 units of housing needed for the chronically homeless using an intervention called Housing First.

Housing First is the gold standard in homelessness services for a small subset of the homeless population, and the investment in this kind of program is essential to achieving our long-term goals.

But in the short term, it will do nothing to stop the rise in unsheltered homelessness. And it will never do anything to directly impact the 1236 kids who experienced homelessness in Maine on a single night in January.


In fact, the \$13 million in annual funding provided by LD2 will go towards meeting the needs of just 370 chronically homeless individuals also counted on the night of the annual Point In Time (PIT) count. LD2 will do a lot of good. But when we look at the numbers, it's hard not to ask why this funding is directed towards such a relatively small percentage of the homeless population. (continued on next page)

Did you know..?

Since 2022, utilization of our community food pantry has increased nearly 20%.



We have served over 1100 individuals so far this year, compared to 950 total in 2022. The need is growing. We need your support now more than ever!



LD2 will do a lot of good. But when we look at the numbers, it's hard not to ask why this funding is directed towards such a relatively small percentage of the homeless population.

The January PIT count identified 4258 Mainers experiencing homelessness. Many will rightly argue that the 370 chronically homeless individuals this will help every year have the greatest impact on other high-cost services like EMS, hospital emergency rooms, and the prison system. But we also know a child who experiences homelessness is also exponentially more likely to experience homelessness as an adult. If we truly wanted to end homelessness, we would also focus on a two-generation strategy and support our children and families to break that cycle.

Programs like Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter's Homelessness Prevention program cost a fraction of what a Housing First program costs, but these funds can have dramatic impact. In 2022 we prevented 331 individuals from entering homelessness. Of this, 125 were children. Our average cost per person? Just \$290.

And yet we have no long-term source of funding to support these efforts and the program is at risk of ending this year.

Ending homelessness is not a zero-sum game and we should provide the services and interventions that meet the needs of all people who need assistance.

Then we need to fund them.

How bad are we at funding solutions? Compare Maine to the other Portland in Oregon. According to their data (which includes the city of Portland and surrounding Multnomah County), they counted 6297 people in January during their PIT count.

The greater Portland, Oregon region has 2000 more homeless folks than Maine, and yet our annual state-wide spending on homelessness here in Maine is just \$24 million compared to their \$231 million. If Portland, Oregon was spending at the same rate as Maine, their budget would be \$31 million.

The truth is, we need LD2. We also need Prevention. We also need more low-barrier shelters, family shelters, and recovery houses. We need more case managers and mental health workers. We need more affordable housing, and we desperately need more landlords willing to rent to people with a voucher. And we need better support for low-wealth tenants.

In short, we need more of everything.

But until we're willing to make these investments, the sad reality is we will never get out in front of this problem.

In fact, it will only get worse.

The good news is we do know how to end homelessness. We just need the political and financial will to make it happen.



Dr. Katie Spencer-White
MMHSS CEO



We'll be walking across Waterville on Saturday, September 16th at 10a. This is a fundraiser - with every dollar going directly to the work of MMHSS - but also to raise awareness of the need for our work.



Register for our walk-a-thon by going to our website! www.shelterme.org



One of our guests is a prolific crocheter and is amazing us with his beautiful creations. Just look at this gorgeous throw!



Many thanks to our local Aubuchon Hardware in Waterville for their donation! They donated over \$2,076.19, which was matched by the company. Thank you, Aubuchon!

Our operating budget was less than 50% funded by state and federal grants in 2022. That means the rest comes from donations and fundraising.

Below is our most recent wishlist. Every item, no matter how small that is donated is an enormous help! Items can be dropped off at 19 Colby Street 10a-4p T-F. If you'd like to donate and don't have time to shop, monetary donations are also always appreciated!

You can also shop our

amazon

Wish list!



SCAN ME

WISHLIST

SHAMPOO

TWIN SHEETS

BOTTLED WATER

DEODORANT

PLASTIC TOTES

TRIPLE ANTI-BIOTIC OINTMENT

RAZORS

DISINFECTANT WIPES

SANDALS (M AND W)

TWIN BLANKETS

GLASS CLEANER

GROUND COFFEE

How can you help?

- Please follow us on social media! Every 'Like', mention, and share is valuable.
- Volunteer! Even if it's just an hour once per month, that can be so helpful.
- Attend our events! The more the merrier.
- Participate in local politics! Research candidates, talk to your town council.
- Be aware. Awareness and education are critical!



We received 13 backpacks filled with school supplies from incredibly generous Lauri W. Thank you so much, Lauri!



Did you know that according to the National Center for Homeless Education, in the 2020-2021 school year, 1.1 million public school students are experiencing homelessness? Of those students, 10.9% are living in shelter and transitional housing.



207.872.8082

19 Colby St Waterville, ME 04901
shelter@shelterme.org