

Homeless Voices for Justice Candidate Questionnaire 2022
Governor Race
Answers from Sam Hunkler

Introduction

If you were to distinguish yourself from your opponents, what are three key differences you would highlight for voters?

I'm taking no donations so I am beholden to no person, group, special interest, political party, or corporation. I am free to represent the will of the people.
I am not a politician and have never held office.
I have been in service to people my entire adult life starting with the Peace Corps and including my 35 years as a family doctor

Housing

There are currently an estimated 1500 people seeking shelter in Maine compared to 750 seeking shelter before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Do you support the right to shelter for people experiencing homelessness?

Yes No

Comment:

The need for food, clothing and shelter are basic human needs without which we can not take care of ourselves, be employed or contribute to society.

Do you support government funding for shelters for Maine's increasing homeless population?

Yes No

Comment:

The role of government is to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. We need to support the homeless for them to be able to take care of themselves without enabling codependent behavior.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, there were increased government restrictions on the use of public space, this has resulted in criminal enforcement against people experiencing homelessness. Do you support the decriminalization of people experiencing homelessness?

Yes No

Comment:

Cities/towns need to designate areas for homeless shelters and overnight structures.

Do you support allocating government funds to build more affordable homes and subsidize housing for the low-income community?

Yes No

Comment:

A major problem in Maine which needs to be resolved with the help of many different entities, spearheaded by the state.

Do you support providing legal protections for people experiencing homelessness who are subject of discrimination in housing, unemployment, and benefits?

Yes No

Comment:

YES. But this means that we need a functional jurisdiction and legal system to work with.

Food Security

Do you support enacting work requirements for human needs or federal assistance programs, such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)?

Yes No

Comment:

No, not initially, but the goal for all homeless is to support them to find meaningful work for them to be able to take care of themselves and their families.

What is your top priority regarding food security in the State of Maine, and how do you intend to address this issue in our community?

Comment:

Other than the above programs, I don't have an answer for this yet.

Do you support using government funding for food security resources?

Yes No

Comment:

Opioid Crisis

The Homeless Opioid User Service Engagement (H.O.U.S.E.), an established service engagement program to provide 50 opioid users in the State rapid access to low-barrier treatment for substance use disorder and stable housing to support their recovery, was funded by the State of Maine and appropriations are scheduled to cease this coming December. Do you support renewing these appropriations for the fiscal year 2022-2023?

Yes No

Comment:

I need to look at the particulars of the law but we need residential care to really deal with the opioid crisis.

In 2021, there were 621 overdoses in the state of Maine, an increase of 26.7% from the previous year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Part of that is due to the lack of access to detox beds in hospitals and EMS. Do you support increasing the number of detox beds in these facilities?

Yes No

Comment:

I want to see us turn at least one of our prisons into a drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation center to help people deal with the underlying causes other addiction as well as support them to get back out in the community and begin working while being in a residential facility.

Do you support the decriminalization of the personal possession of drugs?

Yes No

Comment:

However I believe that those who have been revived with naloxone need to be put into rehabilitation to end their dance with death. We have limited resources to continue dancing with them and enabling their behavior.