



Preble Street 131st Legislative Priorities – Short Session

The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and to advocate for solutions to these problems.

In the 131st legislative session of the Maine Legislature, Preble Street aims to support legislative efforts centered around the perennial issues impacting some of the most vulnerable of Maine's community – the multi-faceted challenges of homelessness and housing, food insecurity, and racial equity.

1. Homelessness:

- **Expand funding for shelters, particularly low barrier shelters, across Maine.**

Shelter is the initial entry point to a continuum of housing solutions that will resolve homelessness in Maine. We are at a crisis point, reflected in an inability to meet the totality of individuals' and families' shelter needs, even as dedicated social services agencies work together to pool resources and provide wraparound support. Low barrier shelters across Maine are operating at a significant deficit, with some at risk of closing if more funding is not secured.

Corresponding legislation:

- ***LD 2136: An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelter for Unhoused Individuals, Sponsored by Representative Anne-Marie Mastraccio***
- ***LD 2138: Resolve, to Improve Funding for Homeless Shelters, Sponsored by Representative Colleen Madigan***

2. Healthcare:

- **Expand access to funding for recovery efforts.**

As substance use disorder continues to impact communities across Maine, it is vital that we support legislation that promotes a public-health approach to this crisis. Funding for various organizations and services that promote harm reduction and low-barrier access to recovery are crucial to this approach.

Corresponding Legislation:

- ***LD 1975: An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs, Sponsored by Representative Lydia Crafts***

3. Food Security:

- **Ongoing funding to help Mainers access local food.**

Access to local food is an important part of ensuring that communities have access to healthy and nourishing produce, while also supporting agricultural efforts throughout Maine. During the beginning of the 131st Legislative Session, Preble Street supported efforts to provide funding to the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives. This bill increases the ongoing funding to this Fund in an effort to match contributions from public and private sources.

Corresponding Legislation:

- ***LD 2093: An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food, Sponsored by Senator Henry Ingwersen***

4. Racial Equity:

- **Tribal sovereignty for the Wabanaki people.** To acknowledge and repair the harm caused by the Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980, we must urge Governor Mills to reconsider granting tribal sovereignty to the Wabanaki people. The Wabanaki currently hold a restricted status that does not give them a voice at the state level or allow them to govern themselves, preventing them from receiving federal funding in contrast to the other 574 federally recognized tribes across the U.S. Tribal sovereignty is a long overdue and essential move towards equity. It is also a step in formally acknowledging the Wabanaki people as thoughtful stewards of the lands now recognized as the state of Maine, long before settlers established presence here.

Corresponding Legislation:

- ***LD 2007: An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations, Sponsored by House Speaker Rachel Talbot-Ross***
- **Office of New Americans in the Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future.** To ensure the continued success and stability of all individuals in Maine, we must push for a future where all have access to the resources and supportive services that they need. The creation of an Office of New Americans at the state level will help to ensure that New Americans have the support they need to be comfortable and successful in Maine. This office will also help the statewide coordination of resources and services that support New Americans living in Maine.

Corresponding Legislation:

- ***LD 2167: An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans, Sponsored by Representative Deqa Dhalac***

Preble Street will also be monitoring a series of bills related to General Assistance throughout the short session.