No More Cuts!

Affordable Housing NOW!

Homeless Voices for Justice

Special Edition News Letter
April 2017
The State of Maine is currently considering deep and disastrous cuts to anti-poverty programs. We believe these cuts would throw Maine’s poor, working-poor, and homeless further into poverty and destitution.

Homeless Voices for Justice surveyed dozens upon dozens of people living in poverty about the proposed $65 million cuts to SNAP, MaineCare, TANF, and GA. In March and April we interviewed people at the Preble Street Resource Center, the General Assistance office, and Greater Portland Health.

In this special edition of the Homeless Voices for Justice Newsletter, we’ve published some of the responses. We tried to keep the contributions as unfiltered and unedited as possible to capture both their diversity and urgency.

We believe these contributions illustrate the devastation further cuts to anti-poverty programs will bring to Mainers. We are committed to challenging these cuts, and invite interested community members to join our efforts. Information on our April 20th gathering at the State House and Monday meetings are in this newsletter.

Thanks for reading,
Homeless Voices for Justice
The GA pays my medications. I am diabetic and I don’t have income yet. Closing the GA will be like burying me.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our ideas. Why shouldn’t GA close? It helps us and our family members! We also do workfare. If anything I wish the state could shorten the waiting time for work authorization.

I would go hungry if these cuts went through. I would basically feel helpless. I get food stamps. Without food stamps, I’d be in a lot of trouble.

I would end up on the streets without GA.

As it is I barely am able to afford food that is healthy and nutritious. Having an unhealthy diet will indirectly affect the amount spend on medical care due to being unable to access healthy foods.

Cutting MaineCare would leave a gap in preventative medical treatment. TANF cuts will directly hurt children. Getting rid of GA means taking $$$ out of the economy. Not giving $$$ to GA hurts overall economy.

Loss of MaineCare means loss of health: mental and physical deterioration all around – no meds to be stable for health. SNAP = no food – some some $ for food when I run out of EBT. If I lost SNAP I would suffer. If I lost MaineCare = NO MEDS, no counseling, no surgeries, no dental.
I think it is wrong for what they are doing to us. How can we live without MaineCare, GA or TANF? There should be better housing for the people that stay in the shelter, or better housing for everyone that they can help.

I would not get any food if they cut food stamps. How would we live? Right now I think housing is good for everyone that can get it.

If my MaineCare gets cut, I will have no insurance and I’m in recovery and go to the methadone clinic. Without that I would be on the street every day, trying to get high and taking my chances of dying. This is outrageous!!!

There are not enough programs as it is! To cut more funding for homeless people will cause nothing but future mass homelessness!

I think that the budget cuts will only cause more problems and homelessness. NO ON BUDGET CUTS!!

More budget cuts will accomplish NOTHING but more homelessness. If programs cease to exist, the amount of vagrancy will multiply exponentially!

I would not want to be alive any more in a world where I am not covered by healthcare. Also would like the housing costs reduced for low income people – including those who work. My son went to college for 8 years. He cannot find affordable housing for himself and works for the post office. This is ridiculous.
Even WITH a job, I have to rely on SNAP to feed myself. Almost all my income goes toward rent.

I feel that General Assistance helps a lot of people and helps people find a place to live so that people aren’t on the streets.

My parents are very hard workers who are struggling to get by and if I lost food stamps I wouldn’t be able to afford to live independently anymore. It would be a terrible burden. And I would lose my opportunities to become more self-sufficient. We need to invest in the struggling lower class so they can become independent and contribute again.

I think [the cuts] will harm a lot of people that rely on programs just to get by. I know a lot of people whose income goes to rent and bills and without food stamps they can’t eat.

It’s hard enough to get ourselves out of the hole homelessness creates, but this cut will only create more homelessness and poverty.

I think and believe that cutting GA, TANF, MaineCare, SNAP is not right. For example, I am no longer in GA now but I used to receive GA when I came here in 2014. GA helped me in my routine when I was learning English and getting used to the American lifestyle. GA supported me for one year before I got my first job in Maine. Now I work two jobs, I pay my taxes, and volunteer to help others. My opinion is that GA, MaineCare, TANF cannot be cut because these
programs really can help people before they start working.

► I don’t think it’s a good idea to cut GA, TANF, SNAP, and MaineCare because it will push the crime rate up. There’s going to be more drugs because people need to eat and live. That will lead to overdoses, burglaries, because people will do anything to not be sick and hungry. I can’t imagine all the children that will suffer because of the cuts. Everyone goes through rough times in their lives – everyone deserves second chances and resources to lean on.

► If it wasn’t for GA, I’d be homeless again. GA has basically helped me get off the streets. A lot of people depend on this service. If you cut GA out you’ll be creating crisis situations for people. Please don’t stop GA funding.

► I am from Gabon, a little West African country led by a dictator who has no regard for human rights. I was forced to leave my country to save my life. I came to Portland where the General Assistance was vital for me since I had no means to sustain myself. Cutting the entire GA program would be disastrous for asylum seekers like myself. We need it! Don’t cut!

► I am an asylum seeker in Maine and when I arrived, GA supported me during the time I needed to acquire my work permit. I was very sick and because I got help with GA, I was able to take care of myself. GA is very important because it helps you when you are in distress, so cutting GA or assistance will be a
monumental error – it will cause a lot of damage for the homeless.

► I am a single mom with three toddlers! I receive MaineCare and EBT for my children and myself. If I didn’t have that my children would be with no doctor and my son would be dead. I come to GA for help with rent and utilities. My income for SSI is only $733 for my family of four. If not for GA my children would be homeless or taken away. How can that be good for any family?! I think if they take away this help that many families count on for support, the crime rate will go up. People are gonna panic. Worst of all, the children are gonna suffer the most. Their health, medical, and everything else will be affected. If we lose this I will be homeless with three children with no medical, no food, no home. How can this be right?

► Without my pills, I won’t survive.

► I can only do part time these days and can only get healthcare through MaineCare. I fear the welfare cuts would make me lose MaineCare, in which case I’ll have to go to the ER for something like a physical.
Affordable Housing Now!

RALLY AT THE STATE HOUSE to DEFEND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS
APRIL 20th, BUS LEAVES FROM THE RESOURCE CTR @ 9AM

No More Budget Cuts!

Homeless Voices for Justice
207.553.0181
hvj@preblestreet.org

fb event: goo.gl/UUpCbN
Homeless Voices for Justice

meetings every monday @ 9:30 am in group room
I need help managing my son’s preexisting conditions (seizures, autism). I get a lot of help from the programs that could get cut.

MaineCare quite literally saved my life from a chronic illness which prevented me from working. Finally I’m able to work and contribute back to this vital program – it saves everyone, from elderly to the very young.

No one should be homeless in America. No one – no matter who they are. There should be ZERO budget cuts. Actually, the budget for welfare programs needs to be INCREASED, not CUT.

Sucks being homeless. Can’t afford a place. Costs too much.

I am 25 with 2 young children. I have been on the streets for a year now. I currently don’t receive TANF and hardly get SNAP. Every time I ask for help, I get turned down. Just seems like I can never get help without pulling teeth. I can’t imagine how much worse it will be if these programs are cut even more.

It’s very sad to hear about the proposed budget cuts. They will affect me personally and other people and families who depend on GA. For just our family’s basic needs and the needs of our little ones, we need GA. Cutting this program will be inhumane and a disaster, like sacrificing poor people. If you put yourself in our shoes, you may understand why poor people need something like GA. May the Almighty give you the heart to consider not cutting.
With these cuts, I may lose the ability to afford good healthcare and affordable housing which permits me to live decently. Please, no more budget cuts.

Being in the Salvation Army rehabilitation center, I get help through GA with my prescriptions. If cut, there would be numerous people that would be going through a real rough time. All we want is to get right in the world.

GA is a good program – it helps poor people. I am among them, so this is going to affect me. I don’t have a family and I live by myself. I need justice.

Without GA, I can’t pay for rent. I’m jobless right now so I can’t live without general assistance. I don’t have much money to myself. So I’m totally against this decision to cut GA.

I have mental health and physical health problems that prevent me from working. I am waiting for my SSI or SSDI. I applied in 2015. I get GA until I get that. If you cut or cancel GA I will become homeless and it will increase my mental health problems. If you cut my food stamps I won’t have any food or less food. If I get no SSI or SSDI, I will have no help at all. You think you are saving money, but if you cut welfare funds, it increases homelessness. You starve people or put more strain on food pantries. Some people are old and live on SSI. If you cut that, you make them homeless. If you expect families to be able to help themselves, how will they be able to do that when medical costs become too high and MaineCare is the only way they get help? How is it
cost-effective when people overflow the states shelters, put strain on hospitals and first responders?

► As a new Mainer, I don’t have yet authorization to work in the US. GA is assisting me for rent and food now. If the program is cut, I don’t know what I will become. My entire life will be cut, too! Please let GA continue to support people in need.

► I am currently on GA. Without this temporary help I would be homeless. With no other recourse I depend on GA while waiting for disability decision. As a taxpayer, I am grateful for this temporary help. We need to ensure GA does not get cut.

► Horrible thing to do – propose such deep cuts. My MaineCare keeps me stable mentally.

► I was rushed in for emergency surgery back in December 2012, and ended up unemployed and homeless. I have worked all my life and this is the first time that I have been in this situation. Now I see why these programs are so important for people in similar situations, and should continue to help all the people who have no place else to turn. It is very important to find a way to continue with these programs.

► These cuts will negatively affect my life, my emotions, and the freedom I have to live my life as a result of getting some help.

► Taking away GA and cutting all the other programs will definitely triple the homeless population in the city
of Portland. And these people have it hard enough. Very, very poor decision to even propose this stuff.

► Those of us who do not make a lot of money have the right to have affordable housing. It’s our right to live within our means!

► I need MaineCare because it helps with my heart medication! I need food stamps because I can’t always go to the soup kitchen.

► These cuts will make it hard for people who are trying to just make a new start.

► Many people still need hand outs. Cutting these programs will just make things harder for everyone.

► I came from DRC and I have many people helping me out. The GA program gives me food and rent. There is war in my country, no peace, violence every day. That is why I came here to ask for help. So no cuts to GA.

► My husband and I are from DR Congo. We arrived in Portland Maine at the end of December 2016 with everything in our pockets. We fled our country for political reasons that most US citizens know a little bit about. Last two weeks through MaineCare, my husband could have his first dental care in over 40 years. I have a tooth that a dentist in my country left during his operation, creating more than 10 years of pain. I received free intervention at Greater Portland Health that made my life change! With MaineCare and GA, I regain confidence that my husband and I can again think of a real life. We are both 42 and 49 years old. We
need support, like everyone else. Getting some help from GA makes the process of integrating, learning English, and getting used to life in the US much easier. Please no more cuts.

▸ I came from Angola. The GA helps with my economic insecurity. I don’t have money to support myself. Don’t cut the programs.

Homeless Voices for Justice is a grassroots group that works toward social change with, and on behalf of, people who struggle with the realities of homelessness and poverty.

Our organization’s membership and leadership is comprised of people who are homeless and poor or have experienced homelessness and poverty.
We believe calling your representatives, signing petitions, and voting for who you believe is best for office are pieces of what it takes to change policies around issues that affect people who are poor and homeless.

On top of this, we believe we must build an organization of our own that can mount a deeper challenge to cuts on welfare, the effects of gentrification in Portland, and the lack of affordable housing throughout Maine.

Consider joining us for one of our Monday meetings, located at the Preble Street Resource Center Group Room @ 9:30a.

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