

HUD awards nearly \$14 million in grants for affordable housing, homelessness in Maine

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By Edward D. Murphy Staff Writer

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The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has awarded a series of grants to organizations in Maine for affordable housing services and efforts to reduce homelessness in the state.

Six programs in Maine will share \$13.1 million aimed at reducing homelessness, while nine housing agencies in five Maine counties will split about \$500,000 in federal aid to help pay for service coordinators to connect residents with affordable housing programs and services.



U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, a Republican, announced the grants in two separate statements issued Thursday.

“This important funding supports our state’s efforts to help the most at-risk Mainers by providing them with additional resources to promote their health, independence, and overall well-being,” Collins said in a statement about the homelessness reduction grants. She added that the affordable housing grants will help connect Mainers with the resources they need to achieve economic independence.

The largest share of the \$13.1 million in homelessness-reduction funds – about \$9.9 million – will go to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. The city of Bangor and Portland-based social services nonprofit Preble Street each will receive more than \$1 million, and lesser amounts will go to the Maine State Housing Authority, Through These Doors family crisis center in Portland and Community Housing of Maine.

The money will be used for a variety of programs designed to address the problem of homelessness, according to Collins’ office.

According to HUD, an estimated 2,100 people experienced homelessness in Maine on a single night in January 2019, a decrease of 16 percent from the same night in 2018. HUD conducts an annual one-night survey in which participating planning agencies and volunteers seek to identify the number of individuals and families living in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs and in unsheltered settings.

In Maine, most of the homeless people counted as part of the 2019 survey – roughly 2,000 – were located in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs, while about 100 were unsheltered, according to HUD.

The second group of grants, totaling of \$509,826, are from HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which aims to help residents find jobs, increase their income, reduce or eliminate the need for housing aid or welfare, and move toward economic independence and housing self-sufficiency, it said.

The agencies receiving funds include the Maine State Housing Authority, the city of Caribou and housing agencies in Portland, Westbrook, Lewiston, Old Town, Augusta, Brewer and Bangor.

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