

# HVJ Fall 2024 Voting Guide

## State Legislature – House 116

Every election season, Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ) creates educational voter material and visits several community locations to register people to vote. This year, we sent all candidates a series of questions and have published all of their answers, here.

HVJ is a grassroots organization that works for social change with, and on behalf of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty. HVJ is led by organizers who have all experienced homelessness. The founding group in Portland has existed since 1995, and we network in other locations across Maine. Our goal is to build a coalition for, and of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty throughout Maine. We seek to empower people experiencing homelessness and poverty whose perspectives are often excluded from the development of policies and programs that impact their social and economic wellbeing. Disenfranchisement, oppression, and marginalization creates this absence. Therefore, we hope to assert ourselves and our interests in Maine politics through protest, education, positive policy change and reform.

HVJ meets every Monday morning from 9:30-11:30am and is welcoming of everyone who has experienced, or is currently experiencing, homelessness.

For more information, email [HVJ@preblestreet.org](mailto:HVJ@preblestreet.org) or call 207-899-6042 with questions.

Are you registered  
to vote?

Visit [vote.org](https://vote.org) to  
register and see  
what's on your ballot



# State Legislature – House 116



**Samuel Zager**  
Democrat

**Samuel Zager is running unopposed for Maine House of Representatives – District 116.**



# Samuel Zager (Democrat)

(he/him)



- Current Position:
  - Representative of District 116
  - Family physician at Martin's Point
  - Volunteer doctor at Deering High School
  - Tufts University School of Medicine assistant clinical professor
  - Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians
- Issues and Priorities:
  - Health, access, and safety
  - Public education and libraries
  - Environmental stewardship and sustainability
  - Economic vitality and diversity



# In your opinion, what are the most urgent issues facing the State of Maine?



## **Sam Zager:**

"For someone who doesn't have adequate shelter or physical security, that is the most urgent issue and super important. Looking not too far into the future, climate change is the biggest issue facing everyone because it literally threatens our existence. Bending the trajectory towards (1) mitigating prior damage and (2) finding a multi-pronged solution, will be crucial to reducing future suffering--especially for lower income and unhoused individuals. Even though Maine is a small contributor to the problem, we are poised to be an outsized part of the solution. I have always been supportive of efforts that others had started along this line. I also have managed to bring legislators from across the aisle together (LD 881), to improve our climate response and improve our state's economy overall (we are the 41st state in GDP per capita). Growing our state's financial footing would be a game-changer to address housing, hunger, healthcare, and so many other important issues. The \$60M Maine spent to mitigate climate-related storm damage was \$60M that was NOT spent on other things that cause people to suffer, like housing, hunger, and health."

If you were to distinguish yourself from your opponent(s) for voters, what would you highlight as three critical differences?

**Sam Zager:**

"Everyone brings something valuable to the collective work of the Legislature. One of the things that I bring is a grounding in the health impacts of policies. I took a Hippocratic Oath to reduce human suffering caused by disease. As a physician-legislator, I advocate for evidence-based policies that address many upstream factors -- like housing, access to health-promoting food and healthcare. It has greatly influenced my work on the Health and Human Services Committee and in the bills and budgets that I've worked on or influenced."



# What is your plan to address the root causes of homelessness and help people experiencing homelessness in Maine find safe and stable housing?

## **Sam Zager:**

"A major part of this is addressing upstream factors that contribute to food insecurity, housing instability, over-incarceration, disparities and poor health outcomes, and other problems. But people also need relief and assistance now, which is why I've supported policies and appropriations for people currently homeless or insecure regarding housing or healthcare or work."



# Would you support government funding for emergency shelters in Maine?

## **Sam Zager:**

"Yes! I voted for \$100M in housing issues this session, including \$26M in emergency housing (budgets LD 258 and LD 2214), including the additional \$7.5M for low barrier shelters we managed to get into the budget this year. In casting such votes, I think of places like Portland's own Elena's Way. During a visit there in 2023, Preble Street Advocacy Director Terence Miller demonstrated how it's designed with best practices in mind, such as trauma-informed assistance, allowing couples to have proximity (one of the top reasons why some people refuse services), progressive engagement, having all or most services on site and available 24/7."



# Would you support the use of General Assistance to fund shelter beds in Maine?

**Sam Zager:**

"Yes, and I have advocated for that on the Health and Human Services Committee. The governing General Assistance statute has always intended for it to be for emergency assistance (shelter, food, medicine)."





How do you plan to address the problem of food insecurity in the state of Maine and ensure that Mainers have enough food to achieve an active, healthy lifestyle?

**Sam Zager:**

"Please see #6 and #10."



# What is your opinion on Maine's Roadmap to End Hunger by 2030? Do you agree with the governor's office's approach to this issue?

## **Sam Zager:**

"One of the strengths of the report is that it speaks to the structural problems that contribute to food insecurity: "Too many Maine households are struggling to make ends meet, and experiencing food insecurity as a result." One of the structural problems is that those with the fewest resources have the most barriers to overcome; so there are great wealth disparities across generations. This has actually worsened in the past 40+ years, so that wealthy Americans are getting wealthier relative to everyone else. Accessing credit for housing, education, a vehicle, or a small business is especially difficult for low-income individuals. That's why I introduced and got passed this session a pilot program to facilitate improvements in credit ratings for low-income Mainers (LD 1107). I look forward to the results of the pilot, with an eye toward further work in this area."



The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest public health crises in the state of Maine. What programs or initiatives would you support to address this issue within your district?

**Sam Zager:**

"As a community-based family physician, I believe in the importance of comprehensive individual treatment, as well as community-level interventions. I have worked a lot with Director Gordon Smith of the Office of Opioid Response to improve and refine Maine's response. For example, we worked together and got legislation passed last session to facilitate the distribution of naloxone (LD 1333)."



# How do you plan to incorporate the perspectives of people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty into your policymaking?

## **Sam Zager:**

"In my medical practice, I take care of housing-insecure and homeless patients. I listen to them carefully, to understand each person as a person. When asked or invited, I've done the same in the community. Like Andrew Bove said at Elena's Way, 'Dignity is the backbone of what they do here.'"

