



Preble Street 132nd Legislative Priorities – Spring 2025

Preble Street's mission 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 132nd legislative session of the Maine Legislature, Preble Street aims to support legislative efforts centered around the perennial issues impacting the most vulnerable people in our community and address the multi-faceted challenges of homelessness and housing, food insecurity, and racial equity.

Budget

- **Ensure that Mainers stay housed through General Assistance**
General Assistance is the safety net for Maine's most vulnerable individuals and families. An expected initiative in the Biennial budget proposes changing a General Assistance rule to prevent individuals and families from receiving housing assistance for more than 3 months in a single 12-month period (with exemptions for temporary housing and emergency shelter). Approximately 1,809 Maine households could be impacted by this GA rental assistance limitation. It also prevents municipalities from exceeding maximum levels for more than 30 days in 12 months. We oppose these initiatives, which would lead to higher levels of homelessness throughout the state.
- **Protect SNAP/TANF for non-citizens**
With alarmingly high levels of [food insecurity among Maine's immigrant communities](#), now is not the time to make cuts to an essential food resource for non-citizens. We oppose Part VV of the Governor's proposed Biennial Budget, which would repeal the hardship exemption for non-citizens. This hardship exemption allows non-citizens with work documentation who are unemployed to receive SNAP and TANF benefits.

Housing and Shelter

- **Keep emergency shelters open**
Emergency shelters are crucial for individuals to exit homelessness, serving as the entry point to housing support. On average, it costs \$102 to provide one night of shelter for one person experiencing homelessness in Maine. Presently, the Maine State Housing Authority only provides \$7.16 per bed to cover emergency shelter operating costs, a contribution that has remained unchanged since 2016. This bill would provide an additional \$5 million to operational budgets for emergency

shelters, bringing the state contributions for operating costs up to approximately \$18 per bed, per night.

Corresponding legislation:

- LD 698, An Act to Sustain Emergency Homeless Shelters in Maine, sponsored by Sen. Rachel Talbot Ross (D – Cumberland): *This bill would provide \$5 million in ESHAP funding to help cover the operational costs of emergency shelters.*

- **Reduce the burden on municipalities to provide General Assistance**

Corresponding legislation:

- LD 453, An Act to Require the State to Pay 90 Percent of All General Assistance Expenses of Municipalities and Indian Tribes, sponsored by Sen. Joseph Baldacci (D – Penobscot).

- **Increase housing access and strengthen eviction prevention**

Increasing housing access and strengthening eviction prevention is critical in supporting our community. By making housing more affordable and accessible, individuals and families at risk of homelessness can find stable living situations before they are forced onto the streets. Providing these resources ensures that vulnerable populations are protected from homelessness and allowed to rebuild their lives with the security of a stable home environment.

Corresponding legislation:

- LD 521, An Act to Prohibit Discrimination in Housing Based on Source of Income, Veteran Status or Military Status, Sponsored by Rep. Cassie Julia (D – Waterville): *This bill amends the Maine Human Rights Act to prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of an individual's military status, veteran status or source of income.*
- LR 754, An Act to Prohibit Housing Discrimination Based on an Individual's Source of Income, sponsored by Rep. Cheryl Golek (D – Harpswell): *This bill makes it a form of housing discrimination under the Maine Human Rights Act to refuse to rent or negotiate for the rental of a housing accommodation because of a person's source of income.*

Youth

- **Provide access to vital records for homeless youth**

Twenty-three states have laws in place that allow unaccompanied minors to obtain vital records, such as a copy of their birth certificate, without a guardian or parent. Data from the annual Point-in-Time counts shows that youth homelessness is on the rise in Maine, with 210 teens experiencing homelessness on a given night in 2024. Vital documents, such as birth certificates, are critical to obtaining employment, health insurance, and other essential benefits. This bill provides fee waivers for

homeless youth, ages 15 through 21, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, to obtain copies of their birth certificates and other vital records and apply for a driver's license.

Corresponding legislation:

- LD 408, An Act to Allow Unaccompanied and Emancipated Minors to Access Their Vital Records at No Cost, sponsored by Rep. Michael Brennan (D – Portland): *This would provide birth, marriage, and death certificates at no cost to unaccompanied minors.*
- LD 431, An Act Regarding Driver's Licenses for Individuals in Foster Care, sponsored by Rep. Amy Roeder (D – Bangor): *This would provide driver's licenses to unaccompanied youth at no cost.*

Food Security

- **Support efforts to end food insecurity**

According to a recent study by [Hunger Free America](#), the number of Mainers without enough to eat increased by 47.1% between 2021 and 2024. Food banks and soup kitchens are often the first to see this rise in demand: Every year since 2021, the Preble Street Food Security Hub has produced more than 1 million meals and is in the midst of expanding capacity to meet future needs. Preble Street supports LD 415, "An Act to Support Hunger Prevention in Maine and LD 468, "An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food," which would both provide additional funding to nonprofits working to address food insecurity in the state. These bills also facilitate access to local produce for food-insecure individuals and families while supporting Maine's agricultural efforts.

Corresponding legislation:

- LD 415, An Act to Support Hunger Prevention in Maine, Sponsored by Rep. Anne Graham (D – North Yarmouth): *This bill would provide an additional \$1 million annually to nonprofit organizations that provide statewide hunger relief services.*
- LD 468, An Act to Address Food Insecurity by Helping Maine Residents Access Locally Produced Food, sponsored by Sen. Henry Ingwersen (D – York): *This bill would provide an additional \$1.2 million annually to the Fund to Address Food Insecurity and Provide Nutrition Incentives.*

Harm Reduction

- **Oppose 1:1 needle exchange policy**

As substance use disorder continues to impact communities across Maine, we must support legislation that promotes a public health approach to this crisis. Research demonstrates that decreasing the needle exchange to a 1 for 1 ratio will lead to

increased reuse and sharing of needles, which puts people at a greater risk of contracting bloodborne pathogens such as HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C.

Corresponding legislation:

- Preble Street is opposing LD 219, An Act to Limit Hypodermic Apparatus Exchange Programs to a One-for-one Exchange, sponsored by Rep. Anne-Marie Mastraccio (D –Sanford): *This bill would require that all needle exchange programs certified by the Maine Center of Disease Control use the ratio of 1:1 for exchanging needles.*

Tribal Sovereignty

- **Support sovereignty for 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 toward 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 a presence here.

Corresponding legislation:

- LD 391 An Act to Advance Recognition of the Inherent Rights of the Wabanaki Nations, sponsored by Sen. Anne Carney (D – Cumberland): *This bill aims to advance state recognition of the inherent rights of the Wabanaki Nations and restore rights available to other federally recognized Indian tribes under federal law.*
- LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations, sponsored by Sen. Rachel Talbot Ross (D – Cumberland)