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March 4, 2020

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The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development  
US Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins,

I am writing on behalf of Frannie Peabody Center, Maine's largest HIV/AIDS services organization, providing comprehensive care to the HIV/AIDS-affected population. As the state's sole administrator of the three HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS) grants through HUD, **we would like to express our strong support for the appropriation of at least \$430 million for HOPWA in Fiscal Year 2021.**

Frannie Peabody Center has been providing these critical housing services for over two decades, in addition to the hospice services we provided at that time, when an HIV diagnosis was still considered a death sentence.

Throughout nearly three decades, HOPWA grants have supported housing, transportation, case management, and additional services that collectively serve as a model of how we should approach healthcare; not just from a cost-saving perspective, but from a human one. The health outcomes achieved by these wrap-around strategies are well-documented and sustainable. *Housing as Healthcare* supports adherence to life-saving HIV medications, which eliminates HIV transmission risk, contributes to stability for people struggling with mental illness and substance use disorders, provides protective measures for survivors of domestic violence, offers independence for our aging population who would otherwise not have access to stable housing, and serves as a pathway toward health stability.

Frannie Peabody Center currently has as many people living with HIV/AIDS in Maine on the HOPWA subsidy waitlist as there are active subsidies being utilized. Over 2,000 people have received some form of support through Maine's HOPWA grants. As you know, the rising cost of living is forcing people further from critical social and medical services. Additional barriers placed on potential tenants, such as credit checks, prevent people who have been stably housed on a subsidy program from accessing units within the HUD guidelines.

Any cuts to the HOPWA program would threaten the current and potential stability achieved by those living with HIV/AIDS in Maine, and stands in harsh contrast to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, which provides a roadmap to finally ending the epidemic. We urge you to stand with people living with HIV/AIDS in Maine, as well as individuals throughout the country, by rejecting proposed cuts to the HOPWA program.

Respectfully,

Katie Rutherford  
Executive Director  
Frannie Peabody Center