



# 2026 Candidate Survey

**Candidate Name:** Ester Berniece Franklin

**Office Running For:** State Senate

**District:** 3

**Campaign Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/FranklinForSenate/>

## **Please describe your personal and professional experience with nonprofit organizations**

My experience with nonprofit organizations includes volunteer leadership, community-building, and professional partnerships. I served as Vice President of the Board of Directors for Lake George Regional Park from 2023 through 2026, where I saw the value of volunteers, local partnerships, and community support in maintaining public spaces and strengthening rural communities.

I also created the Gas Money Picture Show, a small community event designed to bring people together and provide the exchange of arts/crafts, music, to promote travel among young people. Although it is not a formal nonprofit, it has shown me how much local events depend on volunteers, local businesses, and neighbors who contribute their time and skills.

Throughout my professional career in behavioral health, school-based services, crisis response, and more recently, real estate, I have worked alongside nonprofits, schools, health-care providers, and community organizations to connect people with resources and support families facing mental-health, substance-use, housing, and other challenges. I have learned that nonprofits are often the first place people turn for help and are indispensable partners in strong Maine communities.

Additionally, I have a doctorate in Human Services, which includes the study of the importance of nonprofits in all communities.

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*MANP does not endorse candidates or promote or endorse any political party. MANP's goal is to educate nonprofits and legal and effective advocacy and election season activity, to educate candidates about the impact and potential of the nonprofit sector, and to educate voters by soliciting information directly from candidates on how they would strengthen and partner with the sector if elected.*



**Please describe your top three policy goals.**

First, I will work to strengthen rural health care by improving access to local primary care, behavioral-health care, substance-use treatment, and services that allow older adults and families to remain in their communities. Too many Mainers delay care because of cost, distance, or lack of available providers. We need practical solutions that protect rural providers and make care easier to access and afford.

Second, I will focus on housing as both an affordability issue and a way to prevent homelessness. That means making it easier to build safe, modest homes; helping people repair and remain in the homes they already have; protecting affordable rentals; and preserving manufactured housing. Rural communities need housing options for young families, workers, older adults, and neighbors facing a housing crisis.

Third, I will work for fairer, more understandable utility costs. Families and small businesses should be able to understand their bills and should not be overwhelmed by unpredictable energy costs. Maine needs a practical, diversified energy approach that promotes reliability, transparency, conservation, and fair rates.

**Please provide specific ways in which, if elected, you would partner with the nonprofit sector to achieve the goals of your campaign.**

If elected, I will treat Maine nonprofits as essential partners—not as an afterthought. Nonprofit organizations are often the first to see where families are struggling and the first to respond when public systems fall short.

I will regularly meet with local nonprofit leaders, service providers, volunteers, and the people they serve to understand what is working, where gaps remain, and what state policies are creating unnecessary barriers. I will bring those experiences to Augusta and seek practical, bipartisan solutions grounded in what communities actually need.

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In particular, I would partner with nonprofits to:

Strengthen rural access to mental-health care, substance-use treatment, transportation, food security, and services for older adults and people with disabilities.

Support housing nonprofits, shelters, community-action agencies, and local service providers working to prevent homelessness, preserve affordable homes and rentals, and help people recover from housing emergencies.

Improve awareness of existing programs that can help households lower utility bills through weatherization, energy assistance, home repair, and efficiency upgrades.

Reduce unnecessary administrative barriers that take nonprofit staff away from serving people, while maintaining accountability for public funds.

Advocate for stable, transparent funding and meaningful local input when state programs affect rural communities.

My goal is to be an accessible state senator who listens, communicates clearly, and helps connect state government with the organizations that know their communities best.

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