

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Remove Disparities in the Administration of Emergency Aid**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3761,** as repealed and replaced by PL 1993, c. 707, Pt. I, §3, is amended to read:

### **§ 3761. Emergency assistance**

The department, at the discretion of the commissioner, may establish and operate a program of emergency assistance to needy families ~~with children within the United States Social Security Act, Title IV-A, Section 406(e), and any amendments and additions~~ and individuals.

This program must provide:

**1. Benefits; emergency situation.** Benefits to needy families ~~with children~~ and individuals in emergency situations in which ~~the~~ a family or individual is deprived of the basic necessities essential to their support, including, but not limited to, utility terminations, lack of adequate shelter, lack of transportation necessary to obtain or retain employment or access medical care, and fire and other natural disasters. In determining what constitutes an emergency with respect to utility terminations, the department shall grant assistance when an otherwise qualified individual or family has received a disconnection notice and has exhausted ~~their~~ the ability to negotiate and pay the terms of a reasonable payment arrangement. The program may not be used to supplant local responsibility for operating or funding a general assistance program. The department ~~shall~~ may not expend more than ~~\$750,000~~ \$2,250,000 of state general assistance funds for the purposes of covering the cost of services set out in this subsection; and

**2. Additional emergency services.** Additional emergency services to children who are at risk of removal from the home because of their specified relative's inability to provide care and children in emergency situations where continued presence in the home is not in the best interest of the children. Additional emergency services are defined as those that cover emergency situations resulting from child abuse, neglect, abandonment or domestic abuse. The department may expend other general funds for the additional emergency services described in this subsection.

The department may establish eligibility guidelines and limits on services covered under this program; a limit of at least the amount of the overall maximum limit on assistance under this chapter that was in place on January 1, 2007 must be available for emergencies related to lack of adequate shelter.

**Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and allocations are made.

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF**

**Office of Integrated Access and Support**

Initiative: Provides additional funds to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of the emergency assistance program.

<b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>
All Other	\$1,125,000	\$1,500,000
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GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$1,125,000	\$1,500,000

### **SUMMARY**

This bill expands the emergency assistance program's allocation in statute from \$750,000 to \$2,250,000. The bill also expands coverage to include childless adults, including seniors and people with disabilities.