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Date: (Filing No. H-)

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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**STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
131ST LEGISLATURE
SECOND REGULAR SESSION**

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT “ ” to H.P. 1111, L.D. 1732, “An Act to Expand the General Assistance Program”

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'An Act Regarding the General Assistance Program'

Amend the bill by striking out all of the emergency preamble.

Amend the bill in section 1 in §4302-A by striking out all of subsection 2 (page 1, lines 17 to 24 in L.D.) and inserting the following:

2. Training; minimum requirements. The department shall ensure that all overseers and municipal officials have access to training required in subsection 1, at no cost to the overseer or municipal official, that can be completed in less than 4 hours and is accessible either in person, online or via a pre-recorded video presentation. At a minimum, the training must include instruction on the purpose of the general assistance program, the delivery of trauma-informed services and culturally and linguistically appropriate services as defined in section 4305, subsection 7 and the laws governing the general assistance program's administration, procedures and requirements.'

Amend the bill in section 2 in subsection 1 in the 2nd line (page 1, line 28 in L.D.) by inserting after the following: "during" the following: 'the municipality's'

Amend the bill by inserting after section 2 the following:

'Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §4305, sub-§7 is enacted to read:

7. Appropriate services. A municipality, in administering a general assistance program, shall provide trauma-informed services and culturally and linguistically appropriate services to all applicants. For purposes of this subsection, "trauma-informed services" means services that acknowledge and are informed by the widespread effects of trauma and recognize the potential paths for recovery; recognize the unique signs and symptoms of trauma in applicants, clients, families and staff; respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices; and seek to actively avoid retraumatization. For purposes of this subsection, "culturally and linguistically appropriate

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

1 services" means services that are designed to serve culturally diverse populations in a
2 person's preferred language; function effectively within the context of cultural beliefs,
3 behaviors and needs presented by a person who applies to or is a recipient of assistance
4 from a general assistance program and the person's community; contribute to a work
5 environment that supports diversity; promote community engagement; build trust and
6 relationships with applicants and recipients; actively support and enable recipients to make
7 informed choices; and value and facilitate the exchange of information with recipients.'

8 Amend the bill by striking out all of section 4 and inserting the following:

9 '**Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§1**, as corrected by RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §202, is
10 amended by enacting a new last blocked paragraph to read:

11 The department is responsible for ensuring that each municipality complies with its duty to
12 provide trauma-informed services and culturally and linguistically appropriate services as
13 defined in section 4305, subsection 7. The department shall provide mandatory training to
14 municipalities to ensure that a municipality is able to comply with the requirements of this
15 chapter.'

16 Amend the bill by striking out all of section 5 and inserting the following:

17 '**Sec. 5. 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§6** is enacted to read:

18 **6. Database.** Beginning on July 1, 2025, the department shall provide overseers access
19 to an Internet-based, real-time database containing the information necessary to properly
20 determine an applicant's eligibility.'

21 Amend the bill by striking out all of section 6 and inserting the following:

22 '**Sec. 6. 22 MRSA §4327** is enacted to read:

23 **§4327. Reporting**

24 The department shall use municipal reports, data from the statewide online database
25 required under section 4323, subsection 6 and other metrics to generate a general assistance
26 report to be submitted to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction
27 over general assistance matters no later than January 30, 2026 and no later than January
28 30th of each odd-numbered calendar year thereafter. The initial report must include
29 recommendations regarding a potential extension of the general assistance eligibility period
30 beyond the 30-day limit established in section 4310, subsection 4. All reports must include
31 metrics for: the number of individuals and families who received funds; the basic
32 necessities for which those funds were provided; the length of time those funds were
33 received; which municipalities accessed technical assistance and the number of times that
34 technical assistance was requested, including instances outside of normal business hours;
35 the type of technical assistance municipalities required; the number of calls to the
36 department's general assistance hotline; and the number and content of complaints received
37 and additional metrics as determined necessary by the department. The report must also
38 include data illustrating municipal poverty levels, or regional or county poverty data when
39 municipal-level poverty data is unavailable, and data regarding the use of other public
40 benefit programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the
41 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program in each municipality.'

42 Amend the bill by striking out all of sections 7, 8 and 9.

43 Amend the bill by striking out all of the emergency clause.

1 Amend the bill by relettering or renumbering any nonconsecutive Part letter or section
2 number to read consecutively.

3 **SUMMARY**

4 This amendment makes the following changes to the bill regarding municipal general
5 assistance programs.

6 1. It adds the delivery of trauma-informed services and culturally and linguistically
7 appropriate services to the training requirements for overseers and municipal officials.

8 2. It requires municipalities to provide general assistance with trauma-informed
9 services and culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

10 3. It removes the requirement for the Department of Health and Human Services to
11 require annual training for certain state employees.

12 4. It requires the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that each
13 municipality complies with its duty to provide trauma-informed services and culturally and
14 linguistically appropriate services and requires the department to provide mandatory
15 training to municipalities to ensure that a municipality is able to comply with the general
16 assistance program requirements.

17 5. It removes the requirement that the Department of Health and Human Services
18 provide in-person technical assistance to overseers 24 hours a day.

19 6. It removes the requirement that the Department of Health and Human Services issue
20 written decisions within 24 hours of receiving an inquiry.

21 7. It adds a reporting requirement for the Department of Health and Human Services
22 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over general
23 assistance matters.

24 8. It removes the provision of the bill increasing state reimbursement for the costs of
25 general assistance incurred by each municipality and each Indian tribe from 70% to 90%.

26 9. It removes the requirement for the Department of Health and Human Services to
27 reimburse municipalities for 100% of certain medical care for certain general assistance
28 recipients, for emergency general assistance that exceeds maximum levels of assistance,
29 for temporary housing, for interpreter services and for 5% of direct costs incurred for
30 general assistance granted by a municipality for administrative expenses.

31 The amendment also removes the emergency preamble and emergency clause from the
32 bill.

33 **FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED**

34 **(See attached)**