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**Testimony by State Senator Chip Curry
In Support of LD 1966, “An Act to Facilitate Heating Assistance”**

Monday, February 28, 2022

Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Chip Curry. I am the State Senator for Senate District #11, which comprises the 26 rural coastal and Island communities of Waldo County. I am here to introduce my bill LD 1966, “An Act to Facilitate Heating Assistance.”

Energy and utility costs have skyrocketed this year and while we can hope that energy process eventually stabilize, we should not assume that they will lower. This winter, the price of utilities for gas went up [28 percent](#). Furthermore, most Maine houses are heated by natural gas and with prices increasing, affordability for Maine families seems more and more difficult. The [average cost of heating a home in our state this winter is projected to be \\$972](#) this year which is up nearly \$100 from last winter. Every winter, Mainers with tighter finances can struggle to make ends meet with energy costs, but this year the energy burden is impacting everyone. Ratepayers, especially for electric bills, have seen their costs nearly double. That being said, Maine was fortunate to have received an [additional funding](#) of \$55 million from the federal government for heating assistance this year.

However, getting those funds in to the hands of the utility company has been slow to roll out. I’ve heard from numerous constituents about how they need assistance now and are waiting for fuel deliveries because the funding and the paperwork is cumbersome and taking too long. Heating assistance can mean that your pipes don’t freeze or that you don’t fall behind on your bills. Anything we can do to cut the red tape is necessary. My bill would require the Maine State Housing Authority to adopt rules for our local programs to accept online heating applications for this winter season. I believe this will speed up the application process, especially when we have the funds waiting for folks to use. I want to make sure that everyone who is eligible for help is getting to the programs to help them. There should be no barriers to accessing assistance that can really help Maine families.