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**Maine Community Action Partnership
Supports LD 3, An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief
Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to
Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program**

December 20, 2022

Senator Jackson, Representative Talbot Ross, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee of Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Donna M. Kelley LCSW, President and CEO of Waldo Community Action Partners and President of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we support *LD 3 An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program*.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies (CAAs) deliver programs and services for people with low and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the Emergency Rental Relief program; Head Start / Early Head Start, childcare and more.

This bill will allow our most vulnerable Mainers to stay warm this winter and ensure a warm and safe place to be for others who have no place to go. Unfortunately, many in our great state of Maine live on fixed incomes which do not meet the most basic of household needs. Many of our fixed income and low-income households are our most vulnerable community members including those living on social security, disability, or in low-income households including many families with children. There is no other time in the year when the impact of those low incomes is felt more than winter in Maine.

Your local Community Action Agencies have seen an increase demand for Heating Assistance in the last few months and the need is increasing as we get further into the colder months of the season. Currently over 1000 individuals and families including those with children are in hotels previously supported by Emergency Rental Assistance needing continued support so they can stay warm and dry this winter. Without support the burden will shift to our local communities already burdened with COVID impact and winter needs. There are many more families seeking access to these resources both heating assistance and access to hotels as they have no place to call their own.

All Maine households should have access to basic needs such as a warm, safe, and dry place to be in our Maine winter. Please support LD 3 so we can continue to meet the needs of our most vulnerable Mainers this winter.

Thank you for your time, I am happy to answer any questions that I can.

[Donna M. Kelley, LCSW](#)

President and CEO

Waldo Community Action Partners

207.338.6809

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