



**DONNA M. KELLEY, LCSW**  
President & CEO

December 20, 2022

**Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) 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.**

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 (HEAP), workforce development, Emergency Rental Relief and other housing programs, Head Start/Early Head Start, childcare, transportation, case management 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 in fixed income or Low-income households which do not have the resources to meet the most basic of household needs. Rising costs in all areas is contributing to further pressures and increased financial instability. Our most vulnerable community members are adults receiving social security or disability income, and low-income families with young 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 in demand for Heating Assistance in the last few months and the need is only increasing as we get further into the colder months of the season. Individuals and families who have been supported with Emergency Rental Assistance in local hotels are facing uncertainty as we head into the new year. It is critical that we meet these community needs now through the efforts of LD 3.

Please consider the following:

- WCAP has seen a 40% increase in Emergency Heating Assistance requests since November
- WCAP has had a 30% increase over last year in HEAP assistance applications.
- WCAP has taken 1770 applications since the HEAP season started. Benefits and Resources are not keeping pace with need.
- We are seeing all income categories are being affected with Heating needs, but it is desperate for our fixed income community members and our low-income households with children.

- Statewide HEAP (Heating Assistance) Applications are up 20% compared to last year this time.
- WCAP has 30 households (including those with children) we have been supporting in Waldo County with ERA (Emergency Rental Assistance) Funds in hotels
- Belfast alone has a housing waitlist of 15 families including those with children needing access to hotel units
- Waldo County has no shelter or formal homeless services, and these are critical resources particularly in our cold Winter months.
- ERA Hotel affected Households total 1084 statewide needing continued support which is critical in the winter months in Maine.

Individuals and families including those with children are in hotels previously supported by Emergency Rental Assistance need 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 including heating assistance and or access to hotels as they have no place to call their own given the current housing crisis.

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

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