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Good afternoon President Jackson, Speaker Talbot-Ross, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Marianne Moore. I proudly represent Senate District 6, which includes all of Washington County along with 16 Communities in Eastern Hancock County.

I am here today to testify neither for nor against 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”*.

While I understand and agree, there are many folks in need of additional dollars for fuel, food and more, especially in my district. As we all know, inflation is at a level we have not seen this high in quite some time!

As a Republican, I favor giving taxpayers back their money in the case of surplus funds and greatly appreciate leadership allowing this bill to come before this Committee for proper vetting. I feel it is very important we act responsibly with State Funds. I, also, appreciate the opportunity to share my comments and concerns regarding the bill in its present format!

I appreciate the Sponsors of the bill earmarking unappropriated General Fund monies to those who qualify for the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as well as providing assistance for households who are not eligible for LIHEAP – our middle-income folks in need of Home Energy Assistance (shall we refer to it as ‘MIHEAP’). My concern is the additional staffing requirements of an already overworked agent who handles LIHEAP and now the MIHEAP portion of the bill. With a shortage of intake personnel, our Community Action Partnership (CAP) agencies are already behind and have appointments set out as far as March 2023 just to process this year’s LIHEAP applicants who will qualify for the federal LIHEAP funds currently on hand. Will they be able to provide the needed application processing for those who require assistance and do not qualify for LIHEAP today?

I also understand the need to earmark some of these funds to cover the higher than estimated number of eligible recipients of the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment

Program. I am grateful of the numbers of citizens who **DID** qualify for the \$850 relief checks, and to those who helped them complete their tax returns to meet the October 31st deadline.

This week I had a call from a constituent who was quite concerned about Section B of the bill and the distribution of \$450 checks to offset incurred expenses of eligible Maine recipients. He currently has 17 people in an apartment complex he owns where heating oil is provided as part of their rent. While he, personally, may qualify for **A** \$450 check, his recent oil bill was \$3200. Why should his tenants receive the relief payments when he has the burden of their heating expense?

The Section of the bill I have the deepest concern about is Part D and the use of the unused portions of the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) to fund these initiatives.

In the last budget, we all agreed on the need to fund so many of the important DHHS programs; however, they were all at a minimum level such as the 125% of minimum wage for our essential direct care workers. While they appreciated it, the dollars were **NOT** enough. As we all know, now the minimum wage will jump to \$13.80 on January 1, 2023. How are we going to be able to continue to make the wages competitive in today's workforce market?

If there are FMAP monies available, we should consider providing additional funding to our Nursing Facilities, our Development Services, our Brain Injury Services, our Mental Health Services, our Substance Use Crisis, and our Veterans' homes. Their needs are just as critical!

I am also quite concerned about the use of nearly \$4 million from the *Fund for a Healthy Maine*. The Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22: HEALTH AND WELFARE, Subtitle 2: HEALTH, Part 3: PUBLIC HEALTH, Chapter 260-A: SETTLEMENT FUNDS, **§1512** FUND FOR A HEALTHY MAINE specifically outlines the purpose of the funds. "Winter Energy Relief Payments" is not one of the items identified.

Thank you for your time and your work on this critical issue!

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.