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MeCAP

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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 1282 An Act to Streamline Income Verification Requests for Income Supplementation and Assistance Programs

April 19, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership and we support LD 1282 An Act to Streamline Income Verification Requests for Income Supplementation and Assistance Programs.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the hidden potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

For individuals and families who need the support our various State and Federal programs provide, the stakes are high and the red tape is thick. People have nearly a full-time job just to keep up with each programs' requirements. One must reapply for benefits anywhere from monthly to at most annually, to several programs and giving the same information each time.

This bill speaks to the data sharing relationship between housing authorities and the Department of Health and Human Services to facilitate housing support programs, and I fully support that. We should also consider that in some cases even agencies within the Department cannot talk to each other. It would be helpful to go a step further and ask the State to update the technology infrastructure to meet the needs of both the residents the State serves and the State workforce. The ability for State employees to only see the necessary client data to confirm or deny program eligibility and that they do or do not have it – top line information like name, town, last four digits of a social security number and boxes checked in the various programs - would be better for all concerned.

We would be serving Mainers better, and making our state employees' jobs easier, if we modernized our technological infrastructure. The real need for privacy is trumping the imagined need to keep all records confidential. Presumptive eligibility in more areas would go a long way to thinning that unnecessary red tape, and where the rule or law is already in place to allow for it, as it is with many programs and between these entities, we need our systems to talk to each other so we can let the eligibility work.

Thank you so much for your time and attention.

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