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Mark O'Brien - Augusta
Alan Casavant - Biddeford
Carl Sheline - Lewiston
Kate Snyder - Portland



MAINE MAYORS COALITION

Strengthening Our Cities & Our State

Louise MacLellan-Ruf - Rockland
William Doyle - Saco
Becky Brink - Sanford
Kate Lewis - South Portland
Michael Foley - Westbrook

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**Maine Mayors Coalition
Testimony in Support of LD 1664
An Act to Increase Reimbursement Under the General Assistance Program**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, the Maine Mayors Coalition testifies in support of LD 1664, An Act to Increase Reimbursement Under the General Assistance Program.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of ten Maine communities – Auburn, Augusta, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland and Westbrook – and more than 260,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

Our most immediate concerns are providing essential support and housing to people who need it now. As you're well aware, the General Assistance program provides a lifeline for many who find themselves in dire financial situations. This has been especially true over the last several years when more people than ever relied on the program. You know the reasons – the impact of the pandemic, lack of housing supply and rising costs of homes and rents, and skyrocketing prices for food, fuel, energy and other essentials.

Among those turning to General Assistance are individuals and families seeking asylum. The program was not originally designed to support asylum seekers, and by federal law they are not permitted to obtain work authorizations for 180 days.

We appreciate the support provided by the state and federal governments these last years. With those funds, including rental assistance and emergency shelter, winding down, we expect to see even more people turn to the General Assistance program and as well to our own cities where more services are available.

Increasing state reimbursement for General Assistance, from 70% to 90%, would greatly help to alleviate some of the pressures being placed on our municipal budgets. We're in the process now of finalizing our budgets. Like you, we must balance the competing interests of what our citizens need with what we, and they, can afford. To that end, we have been scrutinizing every program and expenditure in an effort to keep our cities' property taxes as low as possible.

LD 1664 will certainly help us in our efforts while continuing to provide critical assistance to those who truly need it. We urge you to vote ought to pass on this bill. Thank you for your time.