



Testimony of Stephanie Eglinton

Executive Director, Maine Children's Alliance

*An Act to Bolster Maine's Workforce and Economy by Increasing Assistance for Parents Pursuing Education and Employment and by Indexing Unemployment Benefits to the Unemployment Rate*

**LD 1995**

January 16, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Stephanie Eglinton. I am executive director of the Maine Children's Alliance. We are a statewide, non-partisan organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies and promote best practices to improve the lives of all Maine children, youth, and families.

I offer testimony neither for nor against LD 1995. MCA supports the important work of Maine's community action programs to provide "whole family" or two-generation services to improve the well-being of children and families. However, we oppose the additional language in this bill to reduce unemployment insurance benefits to families in need.

Children are part of families. Families are part of communities. The two-generation approach is a well-researched<sup>1</sup> and effective model for family well-being where the needs of children and parents or caregivers are addressed together. Young children gain access to quality early education experiences that lay the foundation for future successful development. At the same time, parents gain access to opportunities to meet education and employment goals, often with the support of coaching. In Maine, Families Futures Downeast<sup>2</sup> is a successful two-generation model that has changed the lives of over 200 individuals in Washington County.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is intended to help families achieve economic security and independence by providing direct cash assistance so that families can address their most pressing needs. The TANF-funded Whole Family Services program complements this critical financial assistance. Community action agencies serve families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. In addition to supporting education and employment goals, the coaches have helped families secure stable housing, access to needed health services, and affordable child care. We encourage continued support of this program.

We strongly encourage your opposition to reduce or index unemployment benefits for those who have lost jobs and are seeking to build family economic security. As demonstrated during the pandemic,

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<sup>1</sup> [2Gen Approach - Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Family Futures Downeast](#)

unemployment insurance is a critical tool for preventing child poverty in times of economic hardship. Its beneficial impact on child poverty was clearly demonstrated during the coronavirus pandemic .<sup>3</sup>

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>3</sup> [Did Unemployment Insurance Lower Official Poverty Rates in 2020? \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/poverty-2020.html)