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Governor

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Commissioner



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January 16, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Chair  
Representative Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1995, *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*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on LD 1995, *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*. While most of the proposed legislation pertains to a program that is not administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, the provision relating to the Whole Family Services Program and federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant funding would impact the Department and families participating in various programs administered by the Department.

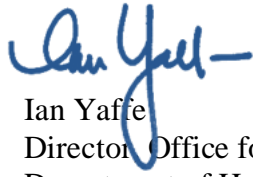
The federal TANF Block Grant is a fixed amount of funding distributed to states on an annual basis. The funding is then allocated by states to programs that advance one or more of the four purposes of the TANF program, as outlined in federal statute. Maine receives approximately \$77.8 million annually and TANF funding is budgeted in five-year increments. TANF-funded programs are administered by different agencies within DHHS, as well as agencies within other State Departments. Many of these programs are created by legislative action, including the Whole Family Services program cited in the proposed legislation. Some programs fully or partially funded with Block Grant include, for example: work and education support programs, sexual assault programs, domestic violence programs, homeless youth programs.

In Maine, the entire amount of TANF Block Grant funding is fully allocated to existing programs through the end of the five-year budget window. Legislatively mandating an increase in one program would then require a decrease in other TANF-funded programs.

The Department strongly supports Whole Family Services (WFS) and believes that the current funding level is appropriate. The Department is working diligently to ensure that the WFS contracted agencies are reaching all eligible Maine families, and believes that there is existing opportunity to reach more households within current funding levels.

The Department appreciates consideration of this information by the Committee during deliberation of the proposed legislation and would be pleased to provide further information or answer any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ian Yaffe", followed by a horizontal line.

Ian Yaffe  
Director, Office for Family Independence  
Department of Health and Human Services