



CITY OF BANGOR

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Testimony in Opposition to LD 2214, Part II, which limits municipalities from exceeding maximum levels of General Assistance past 30 days in a 12-month period for any household

Feb. 26, 2024

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. I am Deborah Laurie, City Manager of the City of Bangor. On behalf of the City and the Bangor City Council, I write to you in opposition to Part II of LD 2214, which seeks to amend the municipal General Assistance statute in order to limit municipalities from exceeding maximum levels of assistance past 30 days in a 12-month period for any household.

This proposed language appears to come forward to limit the State's cost of General Assistance. When reviewing the data that was shared with the Joint Select Committee on Housing on March 21, 2023, the increased use of hotels as temporary housing appear to be one of the primary drivers of the cost to the State.

	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	Jul- Feb FY 2023
Bangor GA Costs						
Housing	1,467,127	1,280,449	1,198,842	778,155	227,039	499,263
All Other	575,656	405,957	290,515	180,656	87,849	50,931
Total (varies from state total (due to timing of postings))	2,042,783	1,686,406	1,489,357	958,811	314,888	550,194
Housing	71.82%	75.93%	80.49%	81.16%	72.10%	90.74%
All Other	28.18%	24.07%	19.51%	18.84%	27.90%	9.26%
# of applications	1,219	1,104	865	652	738	636
Bangor GA Maximum						
1 Person	714	733	759	775	783	826
2 Person	788	814	862	879	909	955
3 Person	994	1,032	1,096	1,116	1,163	1,219
4 Person	1,242	1,294	1,373	1,397	1,447	1,515
Statewide GA Claims	13,456,774	12,687,648	16,714,546	22,740,635	37,107,621	
Bangor	1,947,892	1,690,501	1,490,132	937,812	328,268	
Presque Isle	22,508	27,908	16,546	8,826	3,658	
Portland	7,237,347	7,325,941	10,576,406	16,823,012	32,586,322	
South Portland	415,370	363,382	537,767	582,704	682,902	

In Bangor, we are seeing an increase in our General Assistance costs as federal benefits enacted during the pandemic have come to an end. Limiting an emergency to 30 days within any 12-month period will have significant unintended consequences across the State. In Bangor, the State-established maximum benefits for the current year have increased to \$886 for a one-person household (and \$1,638 for a four-

person household), I have yet to figure out how the basic needs of a one-person household with no income will be met by an \$886 monthly benefit.

While this proposed language may ensure a more balanced State budget, it does not address the underlying causes that result in the need for a General Assistance program. If enacted as written, this change will likely impact the housing stability for many, as exceeding maximum rates can be necessary to prevent an individual or family from losing their housing.

My hope is that the information contained in this testimony will help inform your further deliberation of LD 2214, Part II. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Deborah Laurie, City Manager, debbie.laurie@bangormaine.gov

Cara Pelletier, City Council Chair, cara.pelletier@bangormaine.gov

Jennifer Doyle, Interim Public Health Director, jennifer.doyle@bangormaine.gov

Deborah Laurie
City of Bangor
LD 2214