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**Testimony on the Proposed Change Package to LD 2214
An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State
Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law
Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government
for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, the Maine Mayors Coalition is providing testimony on the increase in General Assistance – Reimbursement to Cities and Towns in Part 00 of the Governor’s proposed change package to LD 2214.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of ten Maine communities – Auburn, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and more than 265,000 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.

As you’re well aware, Maine’s General Assistance program provides a lifeline for many who find themselves in dire financial situations, including individuals and families seeking asylum. The need for the program has grown substantially over the last several years, and we expect that trend to continue in upcoming years.

The Maine Mayors Coalition appreciates the Governor’s proposal to increase General Assistance reimbursement funds by \$5 million for a total of \$10 million in Part 00. Our concern is the additional \$5 million will not cover the anticipated rise in GA costs, which some estimates indicate could require more than \$20 million. Rather, the Coalition supports the Part 00 one time allocation of \$25 million recommended by a majority of the members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Like the state, our cities are experiencing significant increases in the costs of our GA programs with more burdens being placed on our municipal budgets and staffs as well as on our ability to provide other critical services. In turn, these escalating costs are falling squarely on to our property taxpayers.

Sharing a greater percentage of the rising costs of this important and necessary program will help alleviate the financial pressures being placed on our communities and our taxpayers. We respectfully urge you to also support the majority recommendation of the Health and Human Services Committee to raise the level of GA reimbursement to municipalities from 70% to 90%.

We’d be happy to share additional information on our GA programs with you. Thank you for your time and attention to our concerns.