



Town of Winthrop

17 Highland Avenue
Winthrop, Maine 04364
winthropmaine.gov
207-377-7200

Jan. 21, 2025

Committee members:

Apologies for not being there to offer this testify in person, which is my strong preference. I am engaged in collective bargaining today.

It is unclear to us in the Town of Winthrop whether Part S of LD 209 includes recovery residences in the three-month limitation of General Assistance for housing assistance during a 12-month period. If so, the Town of Winthrop enthusiastically endorses this proposed amendment to the GA statute and urges your support.

Winthrop, population 6,121, has two recovery homes. One of those is the state's largest with 53 beds. In fiscal year 2022, the Town distributed \$4,210 in General Assistance. At that time, the Town typically processed one or two GA applications per month. In FY24, following the recovery homes' establishment, that amount soared to \$65,511. Through the first six months of FY25, we have distributed \$60,516 in assistance – on pace to eclipse **\$120,000 in General Assistance this fiscal year**. That means Winthrop taxpayers will shoulder some \$40,000 of that expense, an **increase of 3,167% from three years ago**. That does not include the expense of hiring additional staff to process the approximately 15 applications the Town receives from recovery residents each week. Local taxpayers bear 100% of that administrative cost. Rarely does the Winthrop Town Office receive a GA application from an established town resident.

While few recovery home residents live in the facilities more than a few weeks, some are there longer than three months at a cost of \$695.25 per month. Thus, the proposed change in Part S could alleviate some of the financial strain on local taxpayers in communities with recovery residences, including Winthrop. Coupled with LD 215, a bill sponsored by Rep. Tavis Hasenfus and Sen. Craig Hickman that would remove recovery homes from the GA system, this legislation could be a game-changer for communities that struggle with the ongoing, exorbitant expense of lodging GA recipients for months on end.

Worth noting is that the additional provision in Part S limiting all other General Assistance to 30 days over 12 months will put some GA applicants in a bind. Applying for and receiving food stamps, for instance, takes longer than one month. Otherwise, on behalf of the Town of Winthrop's taxpaying citizens, I urge you to support Part S of LD 209.

Anthony Wilson

Anthony Wilson, Winthrop Town Manager