



Office of the
Mayor

January 21, 2025

Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
c/o Office of Fiscal and Program Review
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed language regarding the General Fund that limits housing assistance under the General Assistance Program to a maximum of three months in a twelve-month period per household and restricts municipalities from exceeding the maximum levels of assistance for all categories for no more than thirty days in a twelve-month period per household.

These proposals will undoubtedly pose significant challenges for both the City of Waterville and the vulnerable individuals we serve. The first proposal, which limits housing assistance to a maximum of three months in a twelve-month period, would have the most profound impact on individuals pending disability benefits from Social Security, as well as those unable to work due to non-work-related injuries or other medical issues. It is important to note that many clients with pending Social Security disability claims often wait two to three years for their benefits to be approved. During this lengthy period, they heavily rely on General Assistance to meet their basic needs.

Furthermore, able-bodied individuals could also be adversely affected by this limitation. Many of those we serve face barriers to employment, including lack of education, transportation challenges, unskilled labor backgrounds, or criminal histories. General Assistance is meant to serve as a safety net for individuals in these circumstances, and imposing a limit of three months could create severe difficulties for those who have nowhere else to turn for assistance when GA is no longer available to them.

The second proposal, which limits municipalities from exceeding the maximum levels of assistance for all categories for no more than thirty days in a twelve-month period, also presents challenges. We have already implemented a similar limit for hotel assistance due to the legislation passed last year in the LD1732 bill. The implementation of this limit has only been in effect since last summer, and we have yet to fully realize the challenges it may impose. However, I am concerned that, in the long term, homeless shelters may see an increase in individuals seeking help, particularly during the winter months, if we are restricted to exceeding our maximums only once in a twelve-month period.



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While the impact on other categories of assistance may be minimal, the housing category will likely be significantly affected due to the disparity between our housing maximums and the current high cost of rentals. This could leave many individuals and families without safe and stable housing options, exacerbating the existing homelessness crisis in our community.

Ultimately, the challenge for our office will be to find adequate resources to direct individuals to in the community, especially as many resources have already been depleted. The available resources may become overwhelmed with individuals seeking assistance, leading to increased costs without the necessary support to cover those costs.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider these proposed limitations on housing assistance and the overall impact they will have on our community. We must prioritize the well-being of our residents and ensure that our safety net programs remain robust and accessible to those in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Morris".

Michael Morris
Mayor - City of Waterville