

Carol Horne
Appleton
LD 209

Senator Margaret Rotundo and Representative Drew Gattine, chairs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

I am submitting this testimony to voice my concerns about the cuts to General Assistance proposed in the Governor's proposed budget for 2025.

It is my understanding that the proposed budget reflects significant funding cuts to the state budget, including benefits to non-citizens including the elimination of the hardship exemption for SNAP and TANF benefits. This is in addition to restrictions on housing assistance for all recipients to a maximum of 3 months within a year per household, in addition to a cap on maximum levels of assistance for more than 30 days per year.

These cuts will affect the neediest of our citizens, persons who have difficulties paying for their basic needs in any other way, including food, housing, utilities and fuel. The GA program has continued to be a necessity for our needy citizens and families that struggle due to job loss, health or medical debt, poverty and other tragedies. We know that lack of adequate housing is on the rise in Maine and nationally, and that more children and families are facing lack of housing due to financial struggles. These proposed cuts seem to me to be short sighted because instead of providing individuals and families with the help that they need before eviction or loss of housing, the outcome will be an increase the numbers of citizens that live without shelter, citizens and non-citizens alike. Lack of resources also places more of a burden on the emergency shelter system, a system that does not seem to be able to provide for the numbers of persons and families in need of shelter in our state. I challenge our legislative body to consider the numbers of Mainers struggling without shelter or heat right now, in the coldest time of year in Maine.

I live in the small town of Appleton. I know of a few families that have lost their houses this winter due to fires and they are struggling. I also know of others in the community that have used GA funding for needed heating oil when they were without to warm their houses when they had not a drop of oil left. I know that these funds are only used for persons in dire need, and I have been very grateful that the funds have been there for them at that time in their lives. I also do not think that there has been enough funding to help with all of the need in our community.

I hope that you will carefully consider these proposed cuts, and restore the funding to General Assistance.

Sincerely,

Carol Horne Appleton, Maine