



## Mid Coast New Mainers Group

*Bridging Cultures to Build Community*

### **Testimony of MidCoast New Mainers Group In Opposition to LD 209, Part S 1/23/2025**

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs Senator Rotondo, Representative Gattine, and Esteemed Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

Our names are Andree Appel and Carol Kalajainen, and we serve as chair and vice-chair of MidCoast New Mainers Group (MCNMG). We want to express our opposition to Part S of LD 209, "An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025."

Part S proposes a three-month cap on housing assistance under the General Assistance (GA) program and restricts the ability of municipalities to provide assistance beyond 30 days in a 12-month period. These changes to the support systems for Maine's most vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to asylum seekers, would have devastating consequences. The current system creates barriers to stability for asylum seekers who need temporary assistance until they are able to work, barriers not of their own making. Asylum seekers arrive wanting to go to work immediately. Our experience is that they do not want to be on assistance, however, federal restrictions on work authorization prevent them from legally earning income for at least six months after filing their asylum applications. Processing delays often extend this waiting period to a year or more.

The proposed three-month cap would leave families without resources and create impossible choices and situations. Without guaranteed support, securing or maintaining housing becomes nearly unattainable, discouraging landlords from renting to asylum seekers and others in need of GA. Part S penalizes families and creates unnecessary barriers to stable housing, increases homelessness, and undermines the partnerships between municipalities, landlords, and community organizations that are essential for addressing these challenges.

Maine needs workers and a younger population. Our strength as a state will increase by helping all achieve independence, including asylum seekers and others with low incomes. Part S works against rather than for independence. We urge the Committee to reject Part S of LD 209 and instead focus on solutions that foster independence for all Mainers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Mid Coast New Mainers Group, P.O. Box 514, Brunswick, ME 04011**

<http://www.mcnmg.org/>

Mid Coast New Mainers Group is an independent, nonprofit, public benefit corporation organized for charitable and educational purposes as described under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; EIN 85-3659037.

No goods or services were provided by the organization in exchange for this contribution.