



175 Lancaster Street · Suite 216 · Portland, ME 04101  
P.O Box 8013 · Portland, ME 04104  
207-797-7890 · [prosperityme.org](http://prosperityme.org)

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

My Name is Ellen McFarland, and I am writing to express my strong opposition to the portion of the supplemental budget that would result in reduction in funding for the General Assistance (GA) program, which provides critical housing and basic needs support for households with little to no income. The current proposal to reduce this support from 12 months to just 3 months is not only misguided but will have devastating consequences for the most vulnerable members of our community, particularly asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers often face long delays in securing work authorization—up to a year or more. They are ineligible for most forms of government support, including subsidized housing programs such as Section 8. This leaves them reliant on the GA program as a temporary bridge to stability while they wait for permission to work and support themselves. The proposed reduction in GA funding will leave these individuals, including children, with nowhere to turn once the 3-month limit is reached. They will have no choice but to rely on emergency shelters, which are not only overcrowded and often at capacity but also far more expensive than permanent housing options.

The cost of housing through GA is a fraction of the cost of temporary shelter alternatives. For example, during the summer months, a single night in a hotel in Cumberland County costs upwards of \$5000 per month. In contrast, average rental costs for GA-subsidized units are typically between \$1000 and \$2000 per month—far more economical and sustainable for both the individuals relying on this support and the community as a whole. By reducing GA funding, the government is essentially forcing individuals into more expensive, less stable living situations, putting greater strain on emergency and transitional shelters that are already overwhelmed and underfunded.

Furthermore, the reduction in GA support will disproportionately affect children, who are among the most vulnerable in our society. Families will be forced into homelessness, and the consequences of living without stable housing can have lifelong impacts on children's health, education, and well-being. The impact of these cuts will ripple through our community, creating long-term challenges that could cost taxpayers far more than the short-term savings the proposed budget seeks to achieve.

It is important to remember that the GA program is a lifeline for those who need temporary assistance while they rebuild their lives and integrate into our society. By reducing this support, we are not only abandoning those in need but also exacerbating the strain on our emergency systems and making it harder for vulnerable populations to succeed and thrive.



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I urge you to reconsider this proposed budget reduction and maintain full funding for the General Assistance program. It is a moral imperative that we continue to support those who are in the most need, especially in a time of uncertainty and hardship.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ellen McFarland  
Deputy Director  
ProsperityME

Ellen McFarland  
Portland  
LD 209

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