

Testimony of Doug Dunbar from Hermon, Maine

**Opposing Part S of the Governor's Supplemental Budget (LD 209)**

Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

and Health and Human Services

January 25, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services, my name is Doug Dunbar. I reside in Hermon.

After three decades of holding positions in the Legislature, Governor's office, Secretary of State's office, U.S. House, U.S. Senate and elsewhere in government, I have been privileged to do *more meaningful work* for the past few years engaging directly with individuals experiencing homelessness—many also suffering from serious health problems.

It is the honor of my life, but I want government to do more—not less—to mitigate the crisis of homelessness and ensure I and others have fewer people—not more—to serve. Alarming, Part S of the Governor's Supplemental Budget (LD 209) would make the crisis worse—harming children, individuals with disabilities, entire families, and whole communities.

Part S makes would limit housing support under the General Assistance Program, except for temporary housing and emergency shelters, to a maximum of three (3) months in a 12-month period per household. It would also limit municipalities from exceeding the maximum levels of assistance for **all** non-housing related assistance to no more than 30 days in a 12-month period per household.

As many of you know, these change would almost certainly create significant additional burdens for the already stressed homeless response system and the individuals it serves. At a time of full shelters, an extraordinary deficiency in affordable housing units, and pitifully little in the way of rental assistance, Maine cannot afford what Part S proposes.

General Assistance is essential to moving people into housing and keeping individuals & families from entering the homeless response system when they become precariously housed. Limits are already in place. Expanding them would be detrimental to some of the most vulnerable people in Maine. This 'penny-wise and pound-foolish' approach may ultimately prove costly to taxpayers as well.

More support, not less, is needed from Augusta to address the crisis of homelessness. At a minimum, please oppose this unwise and harmful proposal. Vulnerable children, families, and individuals suffering from a range of illnesses or disabilities should not pay the price of belt-tightening at the State House. Thanks for your time and consideration of this plea for help.

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LD 209