

Liz Farmer  
Portland  
LD 210

Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Gattine and Meyers,  
Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Housing and Economic Development  
Committee members,

My name is Elizabeth Farmer, and I'm a resident of Portland, Maine.

I'm writing to express support for Preble Street, a Portland-based social services agency, in opposing the budget proposal that would limit General Assistance housing assistance to three (3) months. This proposal would directly and irreparably harm housing-insecure individuals and families in Maine, putting them at greater risk of homelessness during a housing and homelessness crisis.

This attempt at cost-cutting will also result in higher costs over the long-term. Most people receive GA for brief periods, and as a last resort, but the small subset of people who need assistance longer will be forced directly into homelessness and homeless shelters when they cannot afford their rent after 90 days. Homeless shelters are far more expensive than using GA to keep someone housed. The maximum GA reimbursement for a heated, 0-bedroom unit in Portland is \$1,434/month, while MaineHousing puts the average shelter bed cost at \$3,776/month. That is an annual savings of \$28,104 per person on GA vs. in a shelter. Put another way, it is 163% less expensive to keep people housed with GA than it is to support them in a homeless shelter. GA rental assistance also helps people exit homelessness. In December 2024, 58% of the people who exited homelessness from an emergency shelter in Portland used GA.

These limits to GA will further stress an already overburdened homeless response system, leading to increased expenses for shelters, fewer pathways to housing, and creating the conditions for more encampments with people having nowhere to turn.

Thank you.