

This is my written testimony about my opposition to the draconian cuts to GA benefits contained in part S of LD 210, the Supplemental Budget. As a former caseworker for Greater Portland Family Promise, and a current board member of the same, I have seen first hand how the current benefits significantly assist families trying to make a home in Maine. All of my clients at GPFP were asylum seekers who came to Portland for safety. They were eager to work and to contribute positively to society here. All fled very difficult situations in their countries of origin.

The long wait for a work permit in the Asylum system is often made even longer than six months by searching for an attorney to help with application filing. I believe that, were it not for this too-long wait, my clients would have gone to work the first week they arrived in Portland. Having worked with many poor and struggling people over the years in Portland and elsewhere, I can confidently say that my immigrant clients brought their best selves to building a good life in our beautiful State and City. Their successful efforts in higher education, the workplace, houses of worship, and communities is inspiring and more than worthy of the crucial assistance the state gives them.

I know the temporary assistance provided to asylum seekers is repaid many fold by them as they take their places in Maine's workforce. To severely restrict the funding for these families will harm them as they wait to earn their way, and will hurt Maine's economy, which needs these smart, educated, and skilled workers.

I urge you to do everything you can to save this lifeline of GA assistance for these wonderful families and all Mainers who need a hand up as they struggle to rise above their circumstances.