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Portland
LD 210

Testimony of Ngumu Bindang
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

My name is Ngumu Bindang, and I am a new Mainer. I arrived in Maine exactly one year ago with my two young children—one was 5 months old, and the other was 2 years and 5 months old at the time.

When I first arrived, General Assistance (GA) provided essential support for my family—including food, non-food essentials, and diaper vouchers—while I stayed with a family that had graciously agreed to host us. Unfortunately, that family had to move into a smaller apartment, and I had no choice but to leave their home. As a result, my children and I had to move into a shelter, where GA continued to provide this critical assistance.

After two months in the shelter, I was moved to a provisional home. At that time, my first application for a work permit had been denied, which meant I was unable to support my family financially. Because of this, GA also assisted with our rent. I stayed in the provisional home for another two months before finally moving into my own apartment in August of last year. Even after this move, I continued to rely on GA for rent, non-food essentials, and diapers while the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) supported my family with food stamps through the EBT program.

I am relieved to share that just a few days ago, I finally received my work authorization. After nearly a year of waiting, I am eager to contribute to the success of this country through hard work. However, without GA's support, my children and I would have faced a life on the streets in harsh, cold conditions. As a single parent of two toddlers, surviving without assistance while awaiting work authorization would have been nearly impossible.

I stand before you today to strongly oppose the proposal outlined in Language Part VV of LD 210, which seeks to repeal the unemployment exception for state-funded SNAP and TANF. Repealing this crucial exception would not only undermine the essential safety net that has helped me and many others during difficult times, but it would also jeopardize the basic needs of all Mainers. Our communities depend on these programs to ensure that every family has the support necessary to thrive.

I urge you to reject the proposal in Language Part VV of LD 210 and continue to support policies that help all Mainers meet their basic needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.