



February 24, 2025

Senator Margaret Rotundo
Representative Drew Gattine
Honorable Members of Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony regarding LD 210, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government.

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorary members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine. I have the honor of serving as the President & CEO for VOA Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. VOA Northern New England is a faith-based, community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness.

It would be deeply troubling for our state to attempt to balance our biennial budget on low-income households in Maine.

I write in opposition to the proposed biennial budget which attempts to limit housing assistance under the General Assistance Program (the exception of temporary housing and emergency shelters) to a maximum of three (3) months in a 12-month period per household; and which attempts to 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.

The vast majority of people receiving GA only utilize it for brief periods. The small subset of people who need assistance longer are individuals with disabilities who are most at risk for chronic homelessness. Forcing persons with complex and persistent disabilities out of stable housing and directly into homelessness would be outrageous. Maine's most vulnerable populations need access to social supports, resources and rental assistance through GA, especially with the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV – Section 8) Program being frozen for months at HUD's directive with no end in sight due to federal funding issues. Furthermore, landlords will now have an incentive not to accept these tenants as they exit from shelters for fear of losing consistent rents after three months.

Please, oppose this proposal as short-sighted and inequitable.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am grateful for your public service and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard A. Hooks Wayman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard A. Hooks Wayman, President & CEO

VOA Northern New England

14 Maine Street, Suite 100

Brunswick, ME 04011

rich.hookswayman@voanne.org

www.voanne.org

207-373-1140