

Jeffrey Harmon - Auburn
Martin Grohman - Biddeford
Carl Sheline - Lewiston
Mark Dion - Portland
Penelope York - Rockland
Cara Pelletier - Bangor



Jodi MacPhail - Saco
Becky Brink - Sanford
Richard Matthews - South Portland
Michael Morris - Waterville
David Morse - Westbrook

Supported By: Mitchell Tardy Jackson Government Affairs - 104 Sewall Street, Augusta, Maine 04330 - 207-622-1365

**Maine Mayors Coalition Testimony on LD 210
An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other
Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law
Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending
June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027**

Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen and Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services, the Maine Mayors Coalition is providing testimony specific to the funding for Maine's General Assistance program included in LD 210, the proposed biennial budget.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of eleven Maine communities – Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and nearly 300,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

As Mayors, our most immediate concerns are providing essential support and housing to people in need. Over the last several years, more people have turned to the state's General Assistance program given the lack of housing supply, costs of homes and rents, and increased prices for food, clothing, energy and other goods. Our cities rely on the State to fully reimburse municipalities for 70 percent of the GA program. We are hopeful that at some point state reimbursement will return to the previous 90 percent level.

Municipalities are paying not just our 30 percent share of GA benefits, but also for the costs of administering the program. Those costs have increased significantly and placed additional burdens on our municipal budgets, staffs and ability to provide other services.

We need to be certain the funds in LD 210 will, indeed, fully cover municipal reimbursements throughout the biennium. While General Fund monies for GA remain flat at \$10 million in LD 210, total GA funding is reduced to \$13 million in each of the next two fiscal years, down from a total of \$29 million in FY 23-24 and the current allocation of \$23 million.

As you know all too well, any GA costs not covered by the state fall to municipalities and, in turn, our property taxpayers, who have continued to see their taxes rise.

That would include additional costs incurred by limiting individuals and families to three months of housing assistance in a 12-month period. We ask you to consider the impacts such a restriction would have on property taxpayers, but also on the ability to secure already scarce housing and on shelters now operating at capacity.

As you undertake the important, yet difficult, work of balancing the many competing interests and limited resources, we implore you to ensure the General Assistance program is sufficiently funded to fulfill the state's commitment to our most vulnerable citizens as well as to Maine's municipalities.

We, too, are in the process of developing our cities' budgets and understand the long hours and tough decisions ahead of you. Please know we appreciate your efforts and thank you for your time.