

Jennifer Tibbals
Gorham
LD 1029

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Jen Tibbals, and I'm a resident of Gorham, ME.

I ask that you support LD 1029: An Act to Ensure General Assistance for Housing Does Not Reduce Assistance for Other Basic Necessities, and to Increase Presumptive Eligibility and State Reimbursement for General Assistance.

I am a mother of two young children and was recently laid off. Thankfully, my life circumstances mean that I am still able to pay for housing, food, medical care and other needs, at least for several more months, by which time I hope to be employed again. But not everyone is so lucky.

Many other Mainers facing my situation would find themselves on the brink of losing housing, and having to decide between food, utilities, and diapers. General Assistance is a critical program for Mainers facing extreme hardship. By helping people afford food, diapers, medicine, rent, heat, electricity, and other necessities, it is a literal lifeline for households who find themselves in crisis.

I worked at several Maine nonprofits in my career, including Southern Maine Agency on Aging and Preble Street. I have seen the role GA plays for older adults, families, and others in need, and have also seen the strain on our shelter system increasing.

LD 1029 would ensure that though Mainers are spending a larger portion of their income on housing due to skyrocketing rents, anyone on General Assistance would still be able to cover other basic needs in addition to housing costs while on the program.

Currently, people in need are having to leave their communities and travel to larger service areas in the state, because smaller municipalities cannot afford to help them. LD 1029 increases the GA reimbursement rate from 70% to 90%, enabling people to be served effectively within their home town.

Meanwhile, the housing crisis and increased rates of homelessness are putting a strain on our shelter system. By extending presumptive eligibility from 30 days to 6 months, LD 1029 would help municipalities cover some of the costs of shelter beds in their communities. This would reduce the risk of closure of current shelters, which are severely underfunded.

Housing, food, and shelter are basic human rights. I urge you to support LD 1029 to ensure that Mainers and towns facing economic hardship get the help they need.

Thank you.