

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Sara Gagné-Holmes
Acting Commissioner



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April 7, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1017 - *An Act to Include Food Provided or Served at Emergency Shelters in General Assistance Reimbursement*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 1017, *An Act to Include Food Provided or Served at Emergency Shelters in General Assistance Reimbursement*.

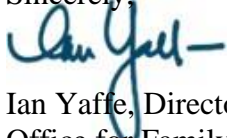
Given the general fund impact of this bill, the Department is opposed to its passage. Below is additional information for your consideration.

This bill includes the cost of food provided or served at emergency shelters as a reimbursable expense for shelter bed nights under the General Assistance program. Currently, a municipality may provide reimbursement for emergency shelter costs through the General Assistance program to the emergency shelter provider for the actual costs of operating the emergency shelter, up to the shelter amount allowed by ordinance in accordance with MRS 22, Ch. 1161, §4304, and local ordinances.

General Assistance also currently allows for assistance with food, which is calculated in the budget of each application. Similar to SNAP benefits, General Assistance vouchers for food assistance may be used to purchase unprepared foods. Providing food reimbursement to shelter guests for prepared food would decrease an applicant's budget for individual food needs while increasing reimbursements to shelters. This change would financially assist shelters but not provide the applicant with direct assistance, which is the primary intent of the program. 70% of this assistance would come from State General Fund and 30% would come from municipal or Tribal budgets. Absent increased funding, which must be legislatively authorized, the Department is not able to absorb the prospective costs associated with amended §4311.

We wanted you to be aware of the above information as you consider this bill going forward. If you have any further questions during your deliberation of this bill, please feel free to contact me or the Department's Government Relations Director, Abby Stivers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ian Yaffe", with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Ian Yaffe, Director
Office for Family Independence
Maine Department of Health and Human Services