

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Sara Gagné-Holmes  
Acting Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Office for Family Independence  
11 State House Station  
109 Capitol Street  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel.: (207) 624-4168; Toll-Free: (800) 442-6003  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 287-3455

April 3, 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 1066 - *An Act Regarding Limits on Municipal General Assistance Programs*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, this letter is to provide information in opposition to LD 1066, *An Act Regarding Limits on Municipal General Assistance Programs*.

This bill limits housing assistance to three months within a 12-month period for any applicant not in temporary housing or in an emergency shelter. It further reduces the ability of a General Assistance (GA) administrator to exceed the budgeted maximum levels of assistance for more than 30 days in a 12-month period for all types of assistance. It increases the duration of a disqualification from receipt of assistance from 120 days to 180 days when an applicant has quit work or been discharged from employment due to misconduct. This bill further directs municipalities to enforce work requirements for applicants capable of working by requiring work performed for the municipality or a non-profit agency as a condition of receiving general assistance.

If enacted, this bill would require that municipalities track the number of days of assistance issued to all clients to ensure each applicant received the appropriate duration of assistance and did not exceed 3 months within a 12-month period. This requirement to track the duration of assistance granted may create an administrative burden on municipalities. Additionally, accurate tracking of assistance durations will require coordination with other municipalities and with the Department.

Limiting assistance above the maximum allowances to one month in a 12-month period could lead to significant cost savings. By setting a clear limit on financial support, LD 1066 can prevent overextending resources, ensuring that assistance is distributed in a more sustainable and controlled manner. This restriction encourages responsible budgeting and helps allocate funds more effectively, ensuring the longevity of the GA program.

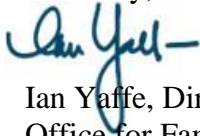
General Assistance disqualifications currently result in a 120-days statewide disqualification from receiving assistance within any town in the state of Maine when an applicant has ended work without just cause or has made a false statement in order to receive assistance for which they were otherwise not eligible for. This bill would increase the length of a disqualification for

work ending without just cause but would classify fraud in the program as a less severe offense, keeping it at a 120-day disqualification. This change could reduce the duration and amount of assistance an applicant could receive in the GA program resulting in a reduction of expenses for municipalities and the Department.

The Department opposes this bill due to the bill's requirement that all municipalities institute a workfare program for eligible individuals to receive GA assistance. GA statute currently allows municipalities to institute a municipal workfare program but only about 9% of municipalities utilize this option. Workfare participants must not replace the employment of regular municipal or non-profit employees and participants require supervision, which may take municipal staff away from regularly scheduled tasks. Additionally, many municipalities are advised by their legal counsel to not engage in this type of workfare due to liability concerns.

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 of the signature.

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