



April 6, 2025

Health & Human Services Committee
Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: 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

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

My name is Dr. Katie Spencer White, and I am the President & CEO of the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services (MMHSS) in Waterville. We are a comprehensive housing and services agency that offers year-round low barrier shelter, one of only six in the state serving people with the highest needs without regard to sobriety, treatment of mental illness, or history of incarceration.

Along with the mayor and city manager of Waterville, I am writing to convey our support of LD1029. While most of the attention for this bill is focused on Portland, I can tell you unequivocally that service center communities collectively bear the brunt of the crisis in homelessness.

The problem is that outside of Portland and Bangor, GA reimbursement for emergency housing under presumptive eligibility has not been efficient or sufficient to warrant the expense of hiring a person to do the work of securing it.

This bill corrects this deficiency in two ways. First, it allows emergency shelters to claim reimbursement for 180 days rather than the current 30 days. Under the current rules for presumptive eligibility, guests are screened to establish that, on full verification, more likely than not, they will be eligible for GA; then full certification takes place on Day 31 and every 30 days thereafter.

“Providing Emergency Food & Shelter to Homeless and Displaced Persons in central Maine”
“Founded by the Interfaith Council in 1990”

Full verification is an onerous and paper-work intensive process, a hurdle which is difficult for people who are unhoused to clear until they have had sufficient time to collect and retain the documentation the process requires. Many people enter homelessness without their vital documents like an ID, bank statements, receipts, pay stubs, and other records full GA verification requires. But this is what our case managers work on with clients when they first arrive; its just that, for many clients, it takes more than 30 days to get everything in order.

For example, you may need to replace a driver's license, but you need to order your birth certificate from New Jersey first. That can take time, time over which we have no control. Allowing shelter providers more time to work with clients, many of whom are in crisis with experiences of trauma that often result a range of emotional and behavioral reactions, including anxiety, fear, and difficulty concentrating, will make sure the system serves the people it intends to serve.

By extending presumptive eligibility to 180 days, it also provides enough certainty that agencies like mine can hire the staff necessary to submit the invoices. Because believe it or not, we are a business and we have the same business needs as all other businesses – if it costs more to generate the invoice than we collect in revenue, we can't submit the invoice.

It sounds simple. But nothing about working with people in crisis is simple, especially a GA recertification every 30 days. In addition to collecting formal documents, people who apply for full GA need to submit receipts of every dollar they spend to make sure it is only spent on necessities. When you live in a congregate shelter, it is incredibly hard to keep track of important things like medications, clothes, phones, and other possessions, let alone you last receipt from Cumberland Farms where you bought Tylenol and coffee. When our guests can't find the receipts, they are denied GA, and we are denied reimbursement. To be clear – by state regulation, we can't charge the guests directly, either. In effect, we are being asked to do the work for free, and that doesn't make any business sense at all.

The second correction to presumptive eligibility offered by LD1029 is that it increases the reimbursement rate from 70% to 90%. Our state does not have homeless shelters in every community where people experience homelessness. Service center communities like Waterville provide life-saving resources to communities that cannot or will not meet the needs of their citizens. LD1029 makes sure that service center communities, who bear the brunt of meeting the desperate needs of the poor, the ill, the elderly, the disabled, and the abandoned, do not fall on the taxpayers of those communities alone but are born by all Mainers equally.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote aught to pass on LD1029.

Kind regards,



Dr. Katie Spencer White
Chief Executive Officer
Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services

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