

Testimony of Doug Dunbar from Hermon, Maine
In Support of LDs 453 and 1029
General Assistance Legislation
April, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Doug Dunbar. I reside in Hermon and oversee Penobscot County Cares (PCC), a small non-profit serving individuals experiencing homelessness, substance use disorder, or other mental health challenges.

Although this testimony is offered in my personal capacity, rather than on behalf of PCC, my experiences with the organization have informed by views about General Assistance and opened my eyes to tremendous, urgent needs in Maine that too few people fully recognize.

I'm writing to express support for legislation to bolster General Assistance programs in all municipalities throughout our state. LDs 452 and 1029 should receive your careful consideration. They would change General Assistance in ways that better-safeguard many of the most vulnerable individuals and families in our state.

During difficult budget cycles, it's obviously extra difficult to make greater state investments in supportive services for Maine residents, but having the foresight and courage to act will almost certainly result not only in less human suffering, but also financial benefits in the long run.

Sadly, most legislators and members of the public have little idea about the magnitude of the crisis Maine faces in terms of homelessness, mental health disorders and other severe problems that lead families to General Assistance. If we don't make adequate investments and changes to policies, the crisis will become even more acute in the days ahead.

Please think through these issues carefully and act in ways that protect the vulnerable and prevent greater needs in the future. Thank you.

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