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Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
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May 19, 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 1952 - *An Act Regarding Home Heating Fuel Assistance*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

This letter is to provide information in opposition of LD 1952, *An Act Regarding Home Heating Fuel Assistance*. This bill creates the Home Heating Fuel Assistance Program and the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance at the Department of Health and Human Services. It transfers the authority and operations of Maine fuel assistance services from the Maine State Housing Authority to the Department and would require a new Office, Director, technology system, purchasing agreements, program rules, and processes. As written the bill requires applications for this program to be accepted beginning April of 2026. This bill also proposes an increase to the current income eligibility for HEAP in Maine from 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 185% FPL. This bill requires an annual report to the legislature and establishes the Home Heating Fuel Assistance Task Force which will advise the new Office.

The Department opposes this bill due to the significant programmatic and fiscal impact which the bill proposes. If passed, this bill would result in significant cost increases to the department in the development of a new Office. Fuel assistance in Maine is currently managed by the Maine State Housing Authority, which is most appropriate due to the alignment of some eligibility requirements being directly linked to the receipt (or verification of non-receipt) of housing assistance. Given the existing expansive responsibilities and services required of the Department, the addition of this newly created Office is not necessary and costly.

If enacted, the Department has additional concerns about the timeline proposed in this bill. Creation of a new Department Office, required staff positions, the design and development of the required technology system, rule-making, and overall program development is not possible to allow for the acceptance of program applications in April of 2026.

We wanted you to be aware of the above information as you consider this bill going forward. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ian Yaffe", followed by a horizontal line.

Ian Yaffe, Director

Office for Family Independence

Maine Department of Health and Human Services