

## LD 1996, An Act to Clarify Responsibilities of the State in the Laws Governing General Assistance

January 29, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Paige Kombakis, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1996 on behalf of the Maine Welfare Directors Association Executive Board.

Implementation of a statewide database remains a critical need for General Assistance administrators around the state. A comprehensive database has the potential to reduce administrative error rates, fraud cases, and could increase data reporting accuracy to the Department.

Maine Welfare Directors Association remains committed to ensuring efficient, standardized, and equitable administration of the General Assistance program throughout the state and a statewide database is one tool that we believe has the potential to assist in that mission.

The Department previously indicated their own interest in implementation of a database. When they were approached earlier this winter with a proposal from a software company working on a pilot database we were hopeful that we would see a resolution to this matter. However, the Department declined the proposal, again, citing budgetary restrictions, despite a proposal that was well below previous bids and already in early development stages.

Investment in a database would mean availability of statewide data that could be used to inform future policy and funding decisions for the General Assistance program. While data driven decision making is becoming commonplace in public policy spaces there is a stark lack of reliable or timely data available for the General Assistance program.

It is for these reasons that the MWDA Executive Board urges the committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1996. An elimination of the database required by statute would be a disservice to municipalities and administrators throughout the state, our applicants, and tax payers.