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Veazie  
LD 1996

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1996 on behalf of the Town of Veazie.

General Assistance administrators continue to operate without access to a statewide database, despite the clear operational and oversight benefits such a system would provide. A centralized platform would help prevent duplication, reduce errors, limit opportunities for fraud, and improve the quality of information shared with the Department.

Consistency and fairness in the administration of General Assistance is essential. Municipalities are expected to follow uniform standards, yet we are required to do so without the basic infrastructure needed to share information or track cases across jurisdictions. A statewide database would directly support more efficient and equitable program administration.

The Department has acknowledged in the past that a database would be beneficial. Earlier, a software company presented a proposal for a pilot system that was already under development and priced well below earlier estimates. While this proposal offered a practical path forward, it was ultimately declined, with cost cited as the primary concern.

Without a statewide database, administrators are often required to rely solely on applicant self-reporting, which limits the ability to verify eligibility and prevent duplicate assistance. A centralized system would significantly reduce opportunities for fraud and improve program accountability.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1996. Eliminating the statutory requirement for a statewide database would remove an important accountability tool and place additional strain on municipalities, administrators, applicants, and taxpayers across the state.