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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan introducing

LD 1675, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the General Assistance Program Regarding Eligibility, Housing Assistance and State Reimbursement and to Establish a Working Group
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I am Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. I am here to introduce **LD 1675, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the General Assistance Program Regarding Eligibility, Housing Assistance and State Reimbursement and to Establish a Working Group.**

As you know, our General Assistance program is crucial in temporarily helping those who need it most by providing funding for the most basic necessities including food and shelter.

This bill amends the current law regarding Maine's General Assistance program. Under this bill, a municipality must calculate housing assistance equivalent to the amount of rental assistance provided for tenant-based housing choice vouchers under Section 8. The bill also extends the period of eligibility from one month to six months.

Beginning July 1, 2023, when a municipality incurs net General Assistance costs in excess of 0.008% of that municipality's most recent state valuation relative to the state fiscal year for which reimbursement is being issued, this bill calls that DHHS reimburse the municipality for 90% of the amount in excess of these expenditures. The bill also directs DHHS to establish a working group to study and make recommendations related to a uniform intake process and the conversion of the General Assistance program into a housing assistance program.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people were reliant on assistance they were receiving from the federal rental assistance program, which has since ended. When that program ended, those same people turned to Maine's General Assistance program for help. Municipalities across the state have been hard hit by rising General Assistance-related costs. This bill will help our municipalities provide support for our more economically vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you have.