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United Way
of Southern Maine



Hello Chair Baldacci, Chair Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Taylor Cray, and I am the Outreach Team Leader with Preble Street's Advocacy Team. I am here today to ask that you please vote "ought to support" on LD 1426: An Act to Secure Housing for the Most Vulnerable Maine Residents by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal General Assistance and 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.

Utilizing general assistance funds to assist with rental costs prevents many Mainers from facing the constant uncertainty of housing instability in an increasingly unaffordable housing and rental market. These bills help to improve Mainers' access to this assistance, both by decreasing the number of times that someone must apply for general assistance, and by helping to reduce confusion, barriers, and inconsistencies in the program. By requiring an overseer to complete training regarding municipal general assistance, LD 1426 will ensure that there is always an individual available who possesses the knowledge and expertise necessary to assist with the often-complicated process of administering general assistance. The working groups suggested by LD 1675 will help to streamline general assistance processes in ways that are beneficial for the individuals and families receiving general assistance, and for the municipalities administering the program. At a time when the cost of nearly every necessary resource, particularly housing, is rising, it is vital that we ensure that our general assistance program works to benefit all Mainers.

The increase in general assistance reimbursement proposed by both bills will help to correct the current imbalances in general assistance across the state. The increase in state reimbursement from 70% to 90% of general assistance costs will mean that municipalities and tribal governments with less revenue will be able to assist more individuals through the program. This also helps to lessen the financial pressure on municipalities and tribal governments. For individuals and families in need of assistance, the ability to remain within their communities is an incredibly important element of stability and support. By increasing general assistance reimbursement, we can decrease the number of folks who are forced to move to access general assistance. The strength of community is a deeply important aspect of ensuring the health and well-being of Mainers, and these bills will help to ensure that communities are not fragmented due to financial reasons.

I ask that you please vote in favor of both LD 1426 and LD 1675.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Taylor Cray
Preble Street
Advocacy Outreach Team Leader