

Testimony in Support of LD 1877
By Dulceneia Standback
February 1, 2024

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Dulceneia Standback, I am a divorced mother of five beautiful children and a full time student. I moved to Maine from Boston last year, to look for a place to live peacefully with my children. I never would have imagined that I would be taking care of my kids alone, however here I am.

In the beginning of the move, things were pretty stressful, since the cost of food and living is very high. I cried myself to sleep many nights, not knowing how I would take care of my kids and be ok, since I couldn't go to work right away. But I found hope after being eligible for food stamps and TANF, which I am very grateful for.

However, a lot of the time it's still difficult to make ends meet and pay my bills on time. I am currently behind on my bills because the amount of money I receive monthly from TANF is still not enough to cover all my bills. I am also aware that many other families are going through the same struggles. And for many of us, it was never our plan to be dependent upon TANF to survive. We want to be financially independent, but it is hard to get there when you are constantly having to think about how to survive day to day.

I never thought I would end up needing to run from a domestic violence situation. I didn't think that would happen to me, but I absolutely had to protect myself and my children. If someone is in a situation like mine, it makes it almost impossible to leave. You have to weigh what is more important—food, shelter, and basic needs, or literally surviving and staying safe. If domestic violence victims knew that they could get the help that they need for necessities like housing and food, it would be easier to leave unsafe relationships. In the end this keeps kids and parents safe and happy. We need to prioritize getting funds directly to families.

Families are having a hard time everyday to make ends meet, and it's very difficult to go through that. I am begging you today to please VOTE YES ON THE BILL, so TANF can be increased, and help so many of us take care of ourselves and our children, whose fathers have completely forgotten and abandoned for some reason or another.