



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
TTY: (207) 287-4469

Rachel Henderson

87 Holyoke Avenue
Rumford, ME 04276
Office: (207) 287-1440
Cell: (207) 381-4237
Rachel.Henderson@legislature.maine.gov

LD637 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Evaluate the Municipal General Assistance Program Database

*Testimony of Rep. Henderson - Rumford
April 7th, 2025*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Rachel Henderson, and I have the distinct honor of representing the people of District-78 in the Maine House. My district is comprised of the beautiful towns of Bethel, Byron, Hanover, Milton TWP, Roxbury, and my home town of Rumford.

I stand before you today to introduce my bill LD637 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Evaluate the Municipal General Assistance Program Database.

I was approached last fall by my town with concerns about the General Assistance Program Database, and was asked to put a bill in that addresses their concerns.

If you are not familiar with the Rumford area, I am more than happy to give you a little context. The largest town in my district, Rumford is the close neighboring town with Mexico, Rep. Schmearsal-Burgess' district. The towns are separate in the sense that they have their own infrastructure, police, fire, town hall, public works, post office. We are however, quite connected. We share a Middle School, in Mexico, and a High School in Rumford. The locals refer to our regional area as "The River Valley". We have businesses that have that title in their name, as well as non-profits, and even our Local Chamber is Called The River Valley Chamber of Commerce, which serve the Towns of Andover, Byron, Canton Carthage, Dixfield, Hanover, Mexico, Peru, Roxbury, and Rumford.

District 78 Bethel, Byron, Hanover, Rumford, Roxbury and Milton Township

The concern Rumford brought to my attention is real. In dialogue with Rumford's closest and largest neighboring town, Mexico, it became evident that there were people who were applying for General Assistance in both towns. They would find a way to provide "proof of residency" in both towns.

There were two specific scenarios shared with me that brought concern:

1. Where an individual would apply for services and be denied, and go to the neighboring town apply with adjusted information, and be approved.
2. Where an individual would apply for service and be approved, in both towns.

In a world that often feels divided and fast-paced, the essence of community shines brightest when we come together to support those in need. Municipalities play a vital role in this tapestry of compassion, serving as the backbone of our collective humanity. By extending a helping hand to the elderly, disabled, and those who have fallen on hard times, local governments have the opportunity to embody the values of empathy, solidarity, and hope.

Every individual has a story, a journey marked by unique challenges and triumphs. I myself have a unique story of poverty, struggle. For some, life's burdens may feel overwhelming, leaving them vulnerable and isolated. It is in these moments that the true strength of a municipality is revealed—not just in the policies they enact, but in the genuine care they offer. Through programs that provide assistance, resources, and connection, municipalities remind us that we are all part of a larger family, bound by our shared experiences and responsibilities. Rumford is one of those communities.

When we invest in the well-being of our neighbors, we cultivate a sense of belonging and purpose. It enriches our communities, fostering environments where everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can thrive. This commitment to uplifting one another not only transforms lives but also strengthens the very fabric of society. In championing the needs of the vulnerable, municipalities illuminate the path toward a more just and compassionate world, where kindness prevails, and every individual is valued and supported.

Moderating assistance programs is imperative. It ensures that resources are allocated effectively and equitably, reaching those who need them most. By implementing thoughtful oversight and assessment, municipalities can identify the specific needs of their communities, prioritize assistance for the most vulnerable populations, and prevent potential misuse of resources.

This targeted approach not only maximizes the impact of funding but also fosters trust within the community, as residents see that support is being directed to those truly in need. Ultimately, moderation helps sustain these vital programs, ensuring they remain robust and responsive, ready to adapt as circumstances change and new challenges arise.

For these reasons, I am of the firm, and unwavering opinion that creating a General Assistance Program Database that communicates with all municipalities is an important step to ensuring that resources are provided to the individuals that need it the most.

Thank you for your consideration.

I am willing to answer any questions you may have.