



Rachel Talbot Ross  
Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

*Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross introducing*  
**LD 1017, “An Act to Include Food Provided or Served at Emergency Shelters  
in General Assistance Reimbursement”**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*  
April 7, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Colleagues on the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of my hometown of Portland and Peaks Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to present LD 1017, “*An Act to Include Food Provided or Served at Emergency Shelters in General Assistance Reimbursement.*” Today, you are hearing about many bills related to proposed changes in the General Assistance, or “GA,” program. This bill proposes a straightforward change to the statute that would modernize and update the state's reimbursement process for food costs.

As this Committee is aware, GA reimburses municipalities for 70% of their direct costs in providing state-mandated assistance. Those direct costs generally include resources a municipality provides for food, water, medicine, and shelter. When a person presents themselves at an emergency shelter in Portland, they are offered not only shelter but a meal. Those meals, under the current statute, are not considered direct costs and thus are not reimbursed under the statute. In contrast, if an emergency shelter offers food vouchers that recipients use to purchase meals, the costs of those vouchers are reimbursed under the GA program.

It only makes sense that where emergency shelters can provide meals within the shelter — a system that promotes efficiency, access, and potential cost savings based on volume — those costs are reimbursable under the statute. It simply makes no sense that food provided directly to a recipient isn't eligible, while resources provided to access food indirectly (such as vouchers) are eligible.

This modernization of the statute recognizes how some emergency shelters currently operate. It doesn't require such shelters to provide food directly but allows those who do to be reimbursed for those expenses.

I thank you for your time today, and I urge your support of this update to the GA statute.

Sincerely,

**Rachel Talbot Ross**  
State Senator, District 28  
*Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island*