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Testimony Before the Joint Standing Committees on Taxation
May 14, 2025

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Taxation,

Good afternoon. My name is Kelley Glidden, and I am the Workforce Program Manager at New Ventures Maine, where I previously held the role of CA\$H Coordinator. I live in the town of Topsham, and I'm here today to speak in support of LD 1876, specifically part C.

For this testimony, I am speaking in the capacity of New Ventures' role as the coordinating organization for CA\$H Maine, a statewide collaboration of nine coalitions, comprised of 50 non- and for-profit partners, working together to help empower Maine individuals and families to achieve long-term financial stability. Since 2003, CA\$H Maine has offered free tax preparation to qualified filers during tax season and educated families and individuals about programs in the community that can help them meet their financial needs and reach their financial goals.

Last year, CA\$H Maine assisted 5,876 tax filers from households with incomes below \$64,000. This work was partially funded by a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) grant from the IRS, and supplemented by state funding. Increased funding for the CA\$H program would allow us to sustain the program and increase the number of people served. The actual tax returns are done by volunteers, but staff support is needed for coordination, recruiting and training volunteers, tax site management, grant reporting and other administrative tasks. Each year, appointments fill up and we are not able to serve everyone who requests assistance. This additional funding would allow the CA\$H coalitions to build their capacity to serve their communities.

As families throughout Maine face rising costs for housing, groceries, childcare, and other essentials, a tax refund can be a lifeline that keeps families afloat. Many of them are not comfortable filing their own taxes because they don't know how, or lack a computer or internet access. Without the free assistance provided by CA\$H Maine, they would be in a position of spending money they can ill afford on professional tax assistance. We would rather see them able to save their money to help them reach their financial goals.

We understand that difficult decisions will need to be made about priorities in the state budget, and we believe this bill is a way to invest in the economic security of Maine families. We support LD 1896 which would provide increased funding to the CA\$H Maine program for the provision of free tax preparation assistance to low income Mainers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support of LD 1896. I am happy to answer any questions.