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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA) In Opposition to

LD 1996, An Act to Clarify Responsibilities of the State in the Laws Governing General Assistance

January 29, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Amanda Campbell, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1996 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC).

LD 1996 proposes to repeal the sections of 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§6 that provided "an internet based, real time database containing the information necessary to properly determine an applicant's eligibility" to General Assistance (GA) administrators. Maine Municipal Association has advocated for reforms to the GA program for several sessions, including a platform bill during the 131st Legislature that included a provision for a statewide database.

Department testimony from April 2025, in response to public hearings on several GA bills, noted that several bids for technology platform initial programming (ranging in cost from \$752,000 to almost \$6 million) had been received through the Request for Proposals process. The Department continued by explaining those costs could not be absorbed under the current fiscal conditions and that a bill would be forthcoming to "clarify what it can accomplish... or to delay the system until funding is available."

Considering the department's previous support for the database and a willingness to postpone implementation of the directive, municipal officials were surprised that the promised clarity ultimately took the form of a proposal to repeal the requirement.

During discussion of this bill, LPC members used words like "essential" and "critical" in reference to the database, to aid not only in streamlined administration of the program but for increasing transparency, reducing error rates, and discovering potential fraud. One member described the database as the most important needed tool, next to increased reimbursements.

A GA database is the most meaningful, cost effective and attainable improvement that is necessary for administrators to provide this state policy at the municipal level. Municipal officials ask the committee to continue to pursue this initiative. LPC members encourage the committee to consider amending implementation dates in statute to allow the department and stakeholders to evaluate potentially viable options and possible solutions.

GA administrators play a key role in this state-local partnership and want to provide the aid for which applicants are eligible while also preserving the integrity of the program.

They need appropriate tools to do so.

It is for these reasons that MMA offers the solution outlined below, which seeks to strike a balance between the department's current budget constraints and keeping implementation of the database in view.

Thank you for your consideration of the municipal perspective on this important topic. Please feel free to contact me or any member of the LPC or the MMA Advocacy team with any questions relating to municipal operations.

MMA Proposed Amendment Language:

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§6, as enacted by PL 2023, c. 575, §6, is amended to read:

6. Database. Beginning on July 1, ~~2025~~ 2028, the department shall provide overseers access to an Internet-based, real-time database containing the information necessary to properly determine an applicant's eligibility.