



January 29, 2026

The Committee on Human Services Committee  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Committee

**Re: LDR 1996 An Act to Clarify Responsibilities of the State in the Laws Governing General Assistance**

My name is Dr. Katie Spencer White, and I am the president & CEO of the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services. I wish to express my opposition to the proposed amendment to 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§6.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak the need for Maine's General Assistance program to collect a broader and more consistent range of data to effectively respond to poverty and prevent homelessness.

General Assistance is one of Maine's most important safety-net programs. It is often the first point of contact for individuals and families in crisis—people facing eviction, fleeing unsafe situations, or struggling to meet their most basic needs. **Yet despite the program's critical role, the data we collect today remains extremely limited and sequestered in the offices of over 400 municipalities.** As a result, too often, we make policy decisions guided more by anecdote than by comprehensive evidence. When we fail to track the true drivers of need—housing instability, medical hardship, caregiving responsibilities, transportation barriers—we lose the ability to design interventions that actually work.

This need for better information was explicitly acknowledged by the Legislature in **LD 1732, "An Act Regarding the General Assistance Program," enacted in 2024**. While the primary purpose of the law was to make determining emergency eligibility more efficient, it introduced several additional major improvements, including a requirement that the Department of Health and Human Services develop a statewide database containing essential eligibility and program information for municipal overseers by July 1, 2025. The legislation also mandates **state-level reporting to the Legislature based on municipal data and the new statewide database**, placing data collection and transparency at the center of General Assistance reform.

LD 1732 makes clear that comprehensive data collection is not a bureaucratic exercise—it is a necessary foundation for accountability, coordination, and prevention. With accurate statewide data, we can identify

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emerging patterns early—rising rents in one region, increased evictions in another, or growing numbers of older adults seeking help—and intervene before a temporary crisis becomes homelessness.

Better data also ensures that public resources are used effectively and equitably. Taxpayers, municipal leaders, and policymakers all deserve clarity on how General Assistance dollars are spent and what outcomes they produce. A robust statewide data system prevents the creation of a patchwork in which some municipalities have strong information and others do not.

Ultimately, comprehensive, standardized data collection is more than an administrative upgrade. It is a moral commitment—to prevention, to dignity, and to ensuring every Mainers can remain safe, housed, and economically secure.

Warm regards,



**Dr. Katie Spencer White**  
**President & CEO**  
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