

**Mayor and Council Offices**

Mark Dion

*Mayor*

January 23, 2025



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**In Opposition to Part S of LD 209**

An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo and Representative Gattine and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Ingwersen and Representative Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Mark Dion, and I am the Mayor of Portland. I submit this testimony in opposition to Part S of LD 209, which would dramatically limit the state's share of General Assistance (GA) to municipalities and cut off hundreds of households dependent on this short-term emergency relief.

Imposing a short time limit on eligibility of three months of housing assistance and 30 days of aid for all other non-housing-related living expenses during a 12-month period may increase evictions of vulnerable tenants, many of whom have jobs, children in schools, and other community connections. Pushing those households – into homelessness would further burden the already under-resourced statewide emergency shelter and transitional housing networks.

Additionally, as a result of the limited financial commitment by the state, these new restrictions may deter landlords from renting to GA recipients, impacting countless future households' ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Lastly, prohibiting reimbursement for municipalities that exceed the maximum levels of assistance based on their true local and regional costs of basic living ignores the reality for those service centers at the core of providing this state obligation and further pushes the costs onto local taxpayers.

While there are exceptions for supporting temporary housing or emergency shelters, as well as for certain hardships, we cannot stress enough the concerns this raises for those across the state who rely on short-term GA to get through a hard patch while remaining housed, or for those working to achieve self-sufficiency in this extremely difficult housing environment. The ripple effects of this change would be dramatic as well as fiscally short-sighted, shifting even more of this state obligation onto local municipalities and property taxpayers.

If this cap in Part S is adopted, nearly 600 Portland households alone could be facing eviction – while we do not know how many households may be impacted statewide, we are sure the

impacts would be felt statewide. Cutting off support for those relying on short term GA for rent would jeopardize our ability to serve Mainers who have nowhere else to turn and will push people into homelessness at a time when we continue to face housing shortages, escalating costs of rent, food and other necessities, and rising building costs.

We are acutely aware of the high cost of addressing homelessness and the financial burden of Maine's GA mandate on both the State and local municipalities. And we appreciate the investments in the continuum of short and long term housing by this administration in partnership with the Legislature, including working in partnership to open the Homeless Services Center, which, in combination with the City's other emergency shelters, provides nearly 220,000 bed nights each year. These proposals would undermine those investments and bring harm to our communities. We urge you to reject this proposal.

Sincerely,



Mark Dion  
Mayor  
City of Portland, Maine