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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 343 An Act To Set Aside Funds from Federal Block Grants for Certain Communities

March 24, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we support LD 343 An Act To Set Aside Funds from Federal Block Grants for Certain Communities, with a single reservation.

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies (CAAs) deliver programs and services for people with low- and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the current rental relief program; Head Start and more. Larger CAAs can provide up to 200 separate programs, smaller generally are able to provide up to 25 or 30.

Based solely on our designation as Community Action Agencies*, we do serve the most vulnerable communities in Maine, almost exclusively. We also serve Tribal members, but I do not have data on what percent that would be. We absolutely support the intent of this bill but would be remiss not to point out that a Federal block grant key to our existence comes with stringent requirements.

The Community Services Block Grant, which funds Community Action Agencies, requires a tripartite Board of Directors, membership of which is spelled out specifically**, triannual community needs assessments, and is designated as a Community Action Agency by the Federal Community Services Administration under the United States Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The CSBG is certainly not the only funding source for CAAs, but it is foundational to the establishment of Community Action, which was created in 1965 to support activities that help to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income families and individuals to become self-sufficient. Under the law, funding can only be awarded to CAAs. That is not to say a Tribal or other organization could not petition to become a CAA, it is only to say it would have to be done.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.

Respectfully Submitted,

[Megan Hannan](#)

[*CSBG Policies and Procedures](#)

**1.4 Community Action Agency Board of Directors

A. Composition of the Board. The board shall consist of at least fifteen and not more than thirty members.

1. Elected public officials or their permanent representatives or officials of public agencies operating in the service area shall comprise one-third of the board.
2. Representatives of low-income persons shall comprise one-third of the board.
3. Representatives of business, industry, labor, religious, welfare, civic, education, or other major groups and interests in the community shall comprise one-third of the board.