



STATE OF MAINE
GOVERNOR MILLS' CHILDREN'S CABINET
181 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0181

April 1, 2021

Senator Ned Claxton
Representative Michele Meyer
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 78, An Act to Protect Children from Extreme Poverty by Preserving Children's Access to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Benefits.

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

The Children's Cabinet is pleased to offer its support for LD 78, *An Act to Protect Children from Extreme Poverty by Preserving Children's Access to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Benefits*.

The Maine Children's Cabinet members include the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Public Safety, and Corrections. In collaboration with key staff from each of these agencies, the work of Governor Mills' Children's Cabinet is coordinated by a staff person in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. The Children's Cabinet has two major goals – to ensure that Maine children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and that all Maine youth enter adulthood healthy, connected to the workforce and/or education.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides vital assistance to families with children experiencing poverty. TANF helps families afford basic necessities, such as shelter and food.

In Maine, 53% of families participating in TANF have children under the age of 6. Families with young children turn to TANF for assistance when they need help with securing employment, face a family crisis such as domestic violence or find themselves unable to work as the result of a family member struggling with a physical or mental health issue.

Participants are required to meet work and other program requirements to receive assistance through TANF. If families fail to meet work or program requirements, then states have the option to implement partial or full-family sanctions in their TANF programs. Partial-family sanctions allow the children in the family to receive assistance. Currently Maine's TANF program implements full-family sanctions – elimination assistance for the entire family – if a parent fails to comply within 90 days following a first

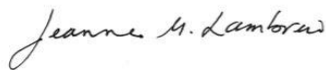
sanction or when a parent receives a second sanction for failure to comply with the requirements of the program.

Research increasingly shows that full-family sanctions cause greater hardship and harm for families with children.¹ In addition, the research also shows that work sanctions do not lead to improving employment outcomes for families. Instead, families face increased hardships, such as inadequate access to food and stable housing, and deeper levels of poverty. Young children living in households with lower levels of income are more likely to have worse health and economic outcomes than their peers.²

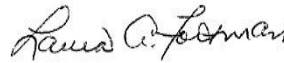
In light of the negative impact full-family sanctions can have on children, especially young children, the Children's Cabinet supports the elimination of the current full-family sanction policy in Maine's TANF program. We urge you to support the passage of LD 78.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Lambrew, Chair
Commissioner of Health and Human Services



Laura Fortman
Commissioner, Department of Labor



Randy Liberty
Commissioner, Department of Corrections



Michael Sauschuck
Commissioner, Department of Public Safety



Pender Makin
Commissioner, Department of Education

¹ Donna Pavetti, "TANF Studies Show Work Requirement Proposals for Other Programs Would Harm Millions, Do Little to Increase Work", Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, November 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-studies-show-work-requirement-proposals-for-other-programs>

² Greg J. Duncan and Katherine Magnuson, "The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty," Pathways, Winter 2011, <http://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways>, Winter11_Duncan.pdf; Ratcliffe

