



Senator Marianne Moore
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0003
(207) 287-1505

Marianne.Moore@legislature.maine.gov

Health & Human Services Committee
Ranking Member

Testimony of Senator Marianne Moore before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

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

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Marianne Moore and I represent Senate District 6 which includes all of Washington County and a few towns in Hancock County. I am here to speak in favor of LD 78, "An Act To Protect Children from Extreme Poverty by Preserving Children's Access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Benefits."

Under current law, the Department of Health and Human Services terminates assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to the entire family, including children, if the children's parent fails to comply with requirements of the family contract for a period of 90 days or for any subsequent failure. This bill amends the provision to terminate benefits for the noncomplying parent but continues to provide assistance to the children and complying parents.

As the State Senator for Washington County, this legislation is of particular importance. The 2020 Maine Kids Count report indicated Washington County has the highest child poverty rate in Maine, with more than 1 in 4 children living in poverty. LD78 ensures their basic needs continue to be met even if a member of the household receiving TANF is a "bad actor" or more often, one parent is unable to overcome barriers to completing the requirements. Under this legislation, it is the noncompliant parent who would be removed from the benefit calculation.

The pandemic has made this legislation even more important. Nationwide the number of children in poverty has risen exponentially. This is certainly true for my constituents; therefore, I hope you will support this legislation and I would be happy to answer any questions.