

Good day Senate Chair Brakey and House Chair Gattine and also to the other honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Susan Lamb and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. I am here today to testify on LD 368, "An Act To Integrate the State's General Assistance and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Programs".

The Maine Chapter of the NASW is strongly opposed to this measure. People who are poor are without their own resources for a reason. There may be a disability in the household that prevents the able bodied and minded from working in order to care for a or several, disabled family members. They may live in remote settings and have no means of reliable transportation in order to go to work. The arbitrary timeline of 60 months explicitly implies that they are deliberately not working without any knowledge of the real circumstances in which they live.

When a municipality decides to give general assistance to a person or family, the municipality usually has direct knowledge of the living circumstances. This is a case where local control is the best determinant of what is right in each individual case. I say this knowing that there are some communities who give out almost no general assistance. I've seen circumstances where a person who needed only a little cash assistance was turned down by her community's general assistance director. I am not concerned that municipal general assistance is abused. It is more than likely that it is under-utilized.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.