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Testimony of Rep. Paulette Beaudoin

L.D. 256, An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Senator Craven, Representative Farnsworth and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Paulette Beaudoin, and I represent House District 135, part of Biddeford. I am pleased to be the primary sponsor of LD 256, "An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families."

This bill is a concept draft that proposes to amend the current law dealing with recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. The bill will require recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families to work with town officials to seek meaningful employment and will require those who receive benefits to work or volunteer in order to continue to receive benefits.

I submitted this bill to find a way to speed the transition from welfare to work. As you might know, those who apply for general assistance meet with municipal officials for an interview before they can receive benefits. My hope is that the committee can find a way to retool the interview to push able-bodied applicants toward available jobs or even volunteer opportunities.

I am a strong supporter of Maine's social safety net. I believe it should be there as a last resort for those who are unable to make ends meet. I also believe that those of us who provide the money for welfare through our tax dollars have an obligation to make sure our fellow Mainers who receive benefits continue to be productive members of society.

Working and volunteering do a lot more than increase the value of our tax dollars. These activities provide people with the sense that they are still contributing to the world around them and a stronger feeling of self-worth.

I reject the notion that someone can be lazy just because he or she receives assistance from the state. But I know that Maine can do more to provide the right incentives and the right values to make sure that the "T" in TANF truly does stand for "Temporary."

I ask the members of the committee to take this opportunity to improve our social safety net and work together to develop L.D. 256 into a bipartisan bill that can make a difference for Maine families.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.