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AGAINST LDs 368, 369, 722, 1035, 1036, 1037

Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine, members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Ben Chin and I am the political engagement director of the Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent. I am here today to testify against LDs 368, 369, 722, 1035, 1036, and 1037.

LD 368, sponsored by Sen. Brakey, "An Act to Integrate the State's General Assistance and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program," applies the five-year lifetime limit on TANF to General Assistance as well. A person no longer eligible for TANF would not be eligible for General Assistance as well.

LD 369, "An Act to Align Municipal General Assistance Programs with the Immigration Status Policies of the Department of Health and Human Services," sponsored by Sen. Brakey, denies general assistance based on immigration status. This change primarily denies asylum seekers access to General Assistance.

LD 722, "An Act to Strengthen Penalties for Abuse of General Assistance," sponsored by Sen Brakey, would force the poor to repay their General Assistance benefits if they misrepresent the facts of their case. Current law already provides a 120 day period of ineligibility.

LD 1035, "An Act to Create a 9-month Time Limit on General Assistance Benefits," sponsored by Sen. Brakey, limits General Assistance benefits to only 9 months every five years.

LD 1036, "An Act to Prioritize Use of Available Resources in General Assistance Programs," sponsored by Sen. Brakey, would make people ineligible for General Assistance if they turn down an "available resource" for 120 days.

LD 1037, "An Act to Establish a 180-day Residency Requirement for Welfare Benefits," sponsored by Sen Brakey, establishes a 180-day residency requirement for MaineCare, food supplement, TANF, and General Assistance.

There are no time limits for the assistance corporations receive from the state. There are no claw-back provisions for corporate tax expenditure programs. There are no corporate residency requirements to receive taxpayer dollars. Ditto for all the tax breaks Maine gives to the wealthy. In fact, the "bonus depreciation" corporate tax break package passed by the legislature just this year cost far more than any of these bills saves. Beating up on the poor may be fashionable. But lawmakers of conscience should reject this double standard.

Thank you for your time,

Ben Chin
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