

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Craven and Chairman Farnsworth and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Susan Lamb. I wish to offer my apologies for not being here in person. I am writing to you as the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers to offer written comments regarding LDs 1815, 1820, 1822 & 1829.

We believe that these bills are not in the best interest of the state of Maine for several reasons. I will outline a few of them here:

1. Sometimes the least expensive place to use your TANF benefits for food is across the border. I'm not referring to Mexico here. A case in point is that many folks who border N.H. find that the prices for groceries in Market Basket are far lower than in Maine's two largest food chains. While this is regrettable, it is true and the program exists for the benefit of poor people who need food and not for any Maine located food chain.
2. The same is true for the purchase of other items with an EBT card. There are places where the cost of clothing is lower than the stores located in Maine. It is also true that folks who live next to the border should not be punished by making them travel great distances to make needed purchases.
3. We think that LD 1822 is already against the law, but if it isn't, we have no objections to it. People will drink or smoke, or gamble to their liking but we do not believe it is the state's job to support habits that other state funds are used to dissuade folks from indulging in.
4. We are concerned that the DHHS has demonstrated on multiple occasions that they are already stressed to the limit at this time. Requiring the DHHS to find the time and staff resources to make these reports would take that time away from their essential duties: protecting the poor, the young and vulnerable the old and frail from the many vicissitudes of life. We do not think it will be time well spent.

Thank you for your time.