MCEDV.

**Maine Coalition to
End Domestic Violence**

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May 12, 2015

Re: LD 452: An Act to Require a Work Search for Job-Ready Applicants for Benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program

Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine, and members of the Committee:

My name is Regina Rooney, and I represent the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence. I am here to provide information in opposition to **LD 452: An Act to Require a Work Search for Job-Ready Applicants for Benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.**

This bill puts up unhelpful roadblocks for victims of domestic violence. It is unrealistic to ask victims of domestic violence who are in crisis, perhaps trying to find a new place to live, or navigate the court system, or parent their children through trauma—indeed, many victims will be doing all three of these things—to apply for not one, not two, but *three* jobs before they can access TANF benefits. Such a policy will set victims up for failure, at a time when they are most vulnerable and in need of support. So many of the families who reach out to our resource centers are existing in survival mode; they are focused on escaping the abuser, on filing for protection orders in court, on trying to find a roof to put over their and their children's heads. TANF benefits can be an important lifeline during this time; delaying access can be detrimental not only to their immediate self-sufficiency, but to their safety.

The policy proposed in **LD 452** will prove damaging to victims' chances of long-term self-sufficiency. Access to financial resources contributes significantly to a victim's decision whether to leave or to stay in an abusive relationship. When we make it more difficult for victims to access the social safety net they depend on to meet their and their children's basic needs—for example, by setting up an arbitrary number of job applications they need to apply for before they can access TANF funds—we make it more likely that that victim will decide that there are no options other than to live with the abuse.