

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Health & Social Services

Testimony of Auburn Health & Social Services Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services April 14, 2015

Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine, members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Dorothy Meagher, Director of Health and Social Services. I am also a board member of the Maine Welfare Directors Association. I am providing testimony on behalf of the City of Auburn.

I am here today in support of LD 368, 369, 722, 1035 and LD 1036. In general, the cost shift, which has occurred in the past few years, has put an undue burden on General Assistance and some municipalities. When the state changes programs but does not include General Assistance in the changes, this becomes an unfunded mandate on municipalities. Specifically, in this fiscal year to date, Auburn has spent \$19,200 on 10 families who have timed out of TANF, as compared to \$607 on 4 families who are still collecting TANF.

When the State stopped helping the uncertified people with TANF and FS, the burden fell on municipalities to help their citizen without reimbursement. The changes made to uncertified residents have put Auburn and other communities in a moral dilemma; do we help or not. Auburn has used non General Assistance funds to assist with the bare minimum of 2 families since December; the financial burden has been \$4,700 which we will not recuperate. We also have 2 more families who will no longer be eligible for state and federal funds in a couple of months; doubling our expenditures. General Assistance is funded with state and municipal dollars, as long as no federal laws are broken, creating a program to help the non-certified members of our communities would be a wining situation for everyone.

Today, I would also like to talk about LD 722, the fraud bill. It is not uncommon when someone has been disqualified from receiving assistance for 120 day, due to committing fraud. They call to schedule an appointment on the 121st day, regardless of the fraud infraction. They get a slap on the hand and then start over with more assistance. Frequently, these cases involve thousands of dollars. I am in support of the extended penalty of 120 days or total reimbursement for GA, which ever is longer. The majority of our clients are honest and appreciative of the assistance granted to them. However there are a few who try to get more than they are eligible for and know in 4 months

they would be back on our rolls. If someone collects assistance from other public programs which they are not eligible for, they have to repay the money they were not entitled to. Why is it with GA they only get a slap on the hands and the money is never repaid?

In closing, I want to thank you in advance for looking out for the municipalities and our citizens.