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**Testimony of Rick McCarthy
On behalf of the Maine Community Action Association**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

In Opposition to LD 1815 An Act to Require a Work Search for Job-ready Applicants for Benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program

March 25, 2014

Senator Craven, Representative Farnsworth, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to comment on LD 1815. My name is Rick McCarthy and I am here today testifying in opposition to this legislation on behalf of the Maine Community Action Association (MCAA), which is comprised of Maine's ten community action agencies (CAP's).

The CAP's mission is to eliminate and alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty by assisting low-income individuals to move toward self-sufficiency. Each year, we serve 200,000 Maine residents providing a variety of services, including Head Start and child care, housing assistance, fuel assistance, and transportation services.

MCAA agrees with the goal of the legislation. TANF recipients should seek to secure gainful employment that will lift them and their families out of poverty. In fact, I think it's fair to say they would like to have stable employment and a reasonable income. But they don't. That's why they're on TANF.

The barriers to gainful employment faced by TANF recipients are varied and significant. Maine is just implementing an assessment process intended to identify the barriers faced by TANF parents and help them move into gainful employment. DHHS has contracted with the Maine Medical Vocational Department to conduct comprehensive assessments with parents once they are enrolled in TANF. That program will help them secure the stable employment they seek.

In contrast, the work search requirement in LD 1815 will just make it more difficult for parents to obtain the assistance they need.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to take any questions.