



Helping People. Changing Lives.

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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 1820 An Act to Reduce Abuse of the Temporary
Assistance for Needy Families Program Through Restriction of Electronic
Benefits Transfers**

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 1820. 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.

LD 1820 offers a proposed limitation on EBT cards that just does not make any sense. It wants to prohibit the use of EBT cards for TANF benefits outside the State of Maine. TANF recipients are by definition low-income families with children. 87% of them are single-parent households. I do not think many of them are using TANF benefits to fund that dream vacation to Yellowstone.

What they are using them for is to meet their daily needs: gas or car repairs, clothes for work, ibuprofen and cold pills, food, laundry detergent, rent. All the mundane things we all need. Most EBT card purchases are made in Maine, but most of us, even the poor, occasionally need to travel out of state.

They may be visiting family in Massachusetts. What if they have to travel to visit a sick relative or attend a funeral? For those who live along the New Hampshire border, all the major retail stores, including grocery stores, are located in New Hampshire. Do we want them to travel longer distances, incurring costs they cannot afford, to shop in Maine?

The poor have enough limitations placed on their lives. We need to encourage their aspirations and helping them be self-sufficient, not weigh them down with unnecessary restrictions.

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

Maine Community Action Association, Inc. is incorporated and is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions, grants and bequests to Maine Community Action Association, Inc. are tax deductible.

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