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### **LD 1822: An Act to Increase Integrity in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program through Restriction of Expenditures**

Public Hearing: March 25, 2014

Testimony of Rep. Sharri MacDonald  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
in Support of

Senator Craven, Representative Farnsworth, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Rep. Sharri MacDonald, and I am the lead sponsor of LD 1822, An Act to Increase Integrity in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program through Restriction of Expenditures.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a welfare program that provides cash assistance to low-income families with minor children. The intent of the federal program is to pay for the daily necessities for a family with kids—it is to ensure the kids are taken care of.

I know I am not alone when I say I do not believe that spending TANF money on alcohol, tobacco, gambling, lottery tickets, or bail is paying for the daily necessities of children. These are examples of misuse of taxpayer funds to help kids. At this time, it is not illegal to purchase these items, but it should be illegal. The Department of Health and Human Services is already working to make ATMs in adult locations, including casinos, strip clubs, and bars, inaccessible to EBT cards for withdrawal of TANF funds. This current bill is a good next step in preventing funds from being used on inappropriate items. Other states also restrict these funds from being spent on similar items, and the Department can tell you more about those states.

Some folks may say it will be difficult to enforce these laws. I know the Department intends to educate new applicants and TANF recipients during their annual renewal on where and how they can use their TANF dollars. This would be one more component to that. Educating people on how to use their benefits appropriately is a good first step. It

will deter people from buying inappropriate items. I know the state has a welfare fraud tip line as well, and the Department has enforcement mechanisms against recipients who don't follow the rules. If we all work together, we can help lower TANF abuse in Maine.

I am pleased to sponsor this bipartisan bill. If you have questions, I know the people from the Department will be able to answer them. Thank you.