

**Testimony of Orinda Fogler, Community Services Manager, City of Bangor, Before the
Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Health and Human Services**

in opposition to

LD 33: An Act to Adjust to Lifetime Limit for the Receipt of TANF Benefits

Sen. Brakey, Rep. Hymanson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services; my name is Orinda Fogler and I am the Community Services Manager for the City of Bangor which administers the second largest General Assistance program in Maine. I am writing today to express my opposition to LD 33.

The lifetime limit on TANF greatly impacts General Assistance. In the past five fiscal years, 105 Bangor households that had reached the TANF 60 month limit turned to General Assistance. In total, these families received nearly \$485,000 in GA benefits. At the current reimbursement rate, Bangor taxpayers paid almost \$145,500 of this tab. If the lifetime limit drops to 36 months, both the number of former TANF recipients seeking GA and the amount of money paid by Bangor taxpayers will likely increase dramatically. This is unquestionably a cost shift local municipalities cannot and should not bear.

Much has been said about the future success of the TANF program now that it is now being managed by Fedcap. Like many others, I hope this change will lead to TANF recipients achieving self-sufficiency within a much shorter period of time. I have seen presentations made by Fedcap staff indicating success can be reached within one to two years. While I sincerely hope this is the case, I'm not comfortable making that assumption given that the Fedcap Breaking The Cycle program was introduced in Maine just a few short months ago.

Families that have exhausted their TANF benefits frequently turn to General Assistance as the safety net of last resort. This is happening with a five year limit and will undoubtedly happen at a higher rate should the cap be set at three years. As I stated earlier, this is simply a cost shift from the State to local taxpayers. Until the Maine Department of Health and Human Services can provide data that shows TANF recipients are achieving self-sufficiency sooner under the Fedcap model, I urge you to reject this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Orinda Fogler
992-4558
rindy.fogler@bangormaine.gov