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Governor

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Acting Commissioner



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April 7, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1274 - *An Act to Cap State General Assistance Reimbursement to Municipalities*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, this letter is to provide information in opposition to LD 1274, *An Act to Cap State General Assistance Reimbursement to Municipalities*.

This bill restricts a municipality from receiving General Assistance (GA) reimbursement for any amount greater than 50% of the amount reimbursed to municipalities in a fiscal year.

Absent any significant changes to historical program utilization, this bill would directly impact the City of Portland and its residents. Portland received approximately 64% of the GA funds reimbursed to municipalities and Tribes in Fiscal Year 2024.

The Department opposes this bill primarily because it would result in an unfunded mandate. Under Maine law, municipalities are required to administer the GA program without regard to the amount of reimbursement they receive. Service centers in particular rely on GA reimbursement to provide essential services and support residents from across the region, or across the state, in some cases. A decrease in reimbursement will not negate the actual need of individuals but rather shift the burden to that municipality's local taxpayers and neighboring communities.

The Department has been warning since 2023 that the growth in the GA program was not sustainable, and that reform is needed to return it to its core mission. Meaningful reform will require changes to eligibility or benefits, not simply cutting off reimbursement for Portland while simultaneously requiring it to administer the program as it is designed in statute today.

Additionally, the Department has concerns about ambiguity in the wording of this bill including how it would calculate the totals and how it would apply the limit before a fiscal year's expenses are known.

Please contact me if you have any further questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Ian Yaffe'.

Ian Yaffe, Director  
Office for Family Independence  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services