



# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**April 7, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1274:**

## **An Act to Cap State General Assistance Reimbursement to Municipalities**

***Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Michele Meyer, and members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services.*** Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes the towns of Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. I am here today to present testimony on my proposed legislation, ***LD 1274 - An Act to Cap State General Assistance Reimbursement to Municipalities.***

This legislation proposes that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) cap the reimbursement to any single municipality at 50% of the total state funding allocated for General Assistance (GA) in any given fiscal year.

The General Assistance program was created to provide financial support to individuals and families in Maine facing hardship. It helps pay for basic necessities like food, shelter, and utilities. In the past, the expectation was that financial assistance provided from the State was both equitable and effective. However, there is an emerging problem that threatens the sustainability of this program.

As it stands, the City of Portland, Maine, has been consuming a disproportionate share of the state's General Assistance funds. From fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2024, Portland received 80.7% of the total General Assistance spending in Maine. Specifically, the City of Portland consumed \$123,167,562.32, which is an extraordinarily high amount when compared to the needs of other municipalities across the state.

In comparison, other municipalities in Maine receive a much smaller share of the total General Assistance funding, despite facing similar needs. This situation has created an unbalanced financial burden on the state's General Assistance system. It has raised concerns about the fairness and sustainability of the program, as well as its ability to meet the needs of all communities equitably.

The growing concentration of General Assistance funds in one municipality has several negative consequences. Municipalities outside of Portland are left with limited resources to support their own residents in need. These communities, especially rural areas, are facing significant challenges in providing for their populations, and this bill seeks to ensure that state assistance is distributed more evenly across Maine's municipalities.

When one municipality receives an overwhelming share of state assistance funds, it places an undue strain on the state's overall budget. This scenario results in fewer resources being available for other necessary services, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure projects, which are equally important to the well-being of all Mainers.

This reckless spending trend from our municipality is unsustainable. The fact that one city can consume such a disproportionate share of state resources is not only inefficient but unfair. By imposing a cap, we can ensure that state funds are distributed in a way that allows all municipalities to meet the needs of their residents, rather than allowing one city to dominate the available funding.

By capping the reimbursement to 50% of the total funding, we can ensure that all municipalities have access to the funds necessary to provide support to their residents in need. This cap will encourage municipalities, like the City of Portland, to explore other methods of assisting residents in need, such as private donations, local initiatives, and increased collaboration with nonprofits. It will also push municipalities to develop more sustainable, long-term solutions to poverty.

In conclusion, the current distribution of General Assistance funds is inequitable and unsustainable. LD 1274 seeks to address this imbalance by capping the reimbursement to any one municipality at 50% of the total funds, ensuring that all Maine municipalities, from urban to rural, have access to the resources necessary to support their residents in need. This bill is a step toward a fairer, more sustainable General Assistance program that serves all of Maine's communities equitably.

I urge the committee to support this bill to help ensure the future of Maine's General Assistance program, and I thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham".

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham  
House Republican Leader