

**Testimony of Rindy Fogler
City of Bangor, Community Services Manager**

Before the

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

April 15, 2015

Good Afternoon Sen Brakey, Rep. Gattine and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Rindy Fogler, and I am the Community Services Manager for the City of Bangor responsible for the City's General Assistance and Housing Programs. I stand before you to present the City of Bangor's position on the bills being considered today.

L.D. 368 "An Act to Integrate the State's General Assistance and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Programs"

The City of Bangor conditionally supports this bill as written. While we believe the majority of TANF recipients should be in a position to support themselves after 5 years of benefits, there is a subset of the population we believe should be exempted from this rule. As you may be aware, all General Assistance programs in Maine have a workfare component that requires unemployed, able bodied individuals without dependents to volunteer monthly at local non-profits for a length of time equal to their total benefit divided by the minimum wage. There are, however, certain individuals exempted from this requirement under State Statute. We propose that this bill exempt those same individuals who are: (1) those with a documented physical or mental disability, including those who are applying for Social Security; and (2) those who are unable to work due to a lack of childcare or the need to care for an ill or disabled family member. We would add to this list those who work but don't earn a wage that allows them to meet their basic needs.

L.D. 632 "An Act to Require the State to Administer and Fund the General Assistance Program:

The City of Bangor supports this bill under the condition that it is not enacted in such a way as to pull Maine residents into the service center communities that tend to be home to local Department of Health and Human Services offices.

L.D. 722 "An Act to Strengthen Penalties for Abuse of General Assistance"

The City of Bangor supports this bill as written. I will add that Bangor's General Assistance program refers for prosecution any individual who has fraudulently obtained more than \$1,000 in benefits. This has been a successful method for us to obtain restitution from the offending client or clients.

L.D. 1036 “An Act to Prioritize Use of Available Resources in General Assistance Programs”

The City of Bangor supports this bill as written as this is the protocol we currently follow.

L.D. 1037 “An Act to Establish a 180-Day Residency Requirement for Welfare Benefits”

The City of Bangor supports this bill as written but would go one step further to establish a residency requirement at the local level. Should a municipal level residency requirement be established, it is important that a GA applicant who has been in the State for 180 days remains the responsibility of the town where residency was established until they have met the residency threshold in their new community. For example, if a client presents in Bangor but has been living here for only one week, we would ask where he or she has been living. If the client came to Bangor from Dexter, it is Dexter who should be responsible for their GA until they meet Bangor’s residency threshold.