

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 117th MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-1995

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Legislative Document

No. 1599

H.P. 1166

House of Representatives, November 30, 1995

### **An Act to Temporarily Reestablish Eligibility Standards for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance.**

(EMERGENCY)

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Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 26. Reference to the Committee on Human Resources suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph W. Mayo".

JOSEPH W. MAYO, Clerk

Presented by Representative GERRY of Auburn.  
Cosponsored by Representative WHITCOMB of Waldo and  
Representatives: ADAMS of Portland, AHEARNE of Madawaska, BARTH of Bethel, BENEDIKT of Brunswick, BERRY of Livermore, BIRNEY of Paris, BRENNAN of Portland, CARLETON of Wells, CARR of Hermon, CHASE of China, CLUKEY of Houlton, CROSS of Dover-Foxcroft, DAGGETT of Augusta, DAMREN of Belgrade, DAVIDSON of Brunswick, DESMOND of Mapleton, DiPIETRO of South Portland, DORE of Auburn, DUNN of Gray, ETNIER of Harpswell, FARNUM of South Berwick, FISHER of Brewer, FITZPATRICK of Durham, GIERINGER of Portland, GWADOSKY of Fairfield, HARTNETT of Freeport, KEANE of Old Town, LAYTON of Cherryfield, LEMAIRE of Lewiston, LOVETT of Scarborough, LUMBRA of Bangor, LUTHER of Mexico, MARVIN of Cape Elizabeth, MERES of Norridgewock, MITCHELL of Vassalboro, MITCHELL of Portland, MORRISON of Bangor, MURPHY of Berwick, NASS of Acton, NICKERSON of Turner, O'NEAL of Limestone, OTT of York, PEAVEY of Woolwich, PINKHAM of Lamoine, POVICH of Ellsworth, ROBICHAUD of Caribou, ROSEBUSH of East Millinocket, SAMSON of Jay, SAVAGE of Union, SAXL of Bangor, SAXL of Portland,

Additional cosponsors on next page

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SIROIS of Caribou, STONE of Bangor, STROUT of Corinth, TAYLOR of Cumberland, TOWNSEND of Portland, TREAT of Gardiner, TRUE of Fryeburg, TUTTLE of Sanford, UNDERWOOD of Oxford, VOLENIK of Sedgwick, WATERHOUSE of Bridgton, WHEELER of Bridgewater, WINGLASS of Auburn, WINN of Glenburn, Senators: BUSTIN of Kennebec, CIANCHETTE of Somerset, CLEVELAND of Androscoggin, ESTY of Cumberland, FAIRCLOTH of Penobscot, FERGUSON of Oxford, GOLDTHWAIT of Hancock, KIEFFER of Aroostook, LAWRENCE of York, McCORMICK of Kennebec, MICHAUD of Penobscot, MILLS of Somerset, O'DEA of Penobscot, PARADIS of Aroostook, PINGREE of Knox, RAND of Cumberland, RUHLIN of Penobscot, STEVENS of Androscoggin.

2           **Emergency preamble.** Whereas, Acts of the Legislature do not  
become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted  
as emergencies; and

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6           **Whereas,** recent funding decisions related to the federal  
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program have created  
significant financial hardships for Maine's low-income, elderly  
8 and disabled citizens; and

10           **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts  
create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of  
12 Maine and require the following legislation as immediately  
necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and  
14 safety; now, therefore,

16           **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

18           **Sec. 1. Eligibility and payment standards.** Notwithstanding any  
other provision of law, until March 1, 1996, the Maine State  
20 Housing Authority shall extend eligibility for low-income home  
energy assistance on the same basis as eligibility was determined  
22 during the 1994-95 heating season and make benefit payments in  
amounts determined by the authority.

24           **Sec. 2. Joint Standing Committee on Human Resources; hearing and**  
26 **legislation.** The Joint Standing Committee on Human Resources shall  
hold a public hearing by January 31, 1996 to, at a minimum:

28           1. Seek alternatives to address State and Federal  
30 Government actions that have had an impact on the federal  
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program in relationship to the  
32 federal food stamp program; and

34           2. Consider long-term solutions and alternatives to provide  
adequate support within existing budgeted resources for the  
36 State's low income, elderly and disabled citizens.

38           The committee may report out legislation or other  
recommendations related to the issues addressed at the hearing to  
40 the Second Regular Session of the Legislature no later than March  
1, 1996.

42           **Sec. 3. Repeal.** This Act is repealed March 1, 1996.

44           **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the  
46 preamble, this Act takes effect when approved.

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## FISCAL NOTE

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4           Although the bill does not have a direct fiscal impact on  
6           the state-administered funds of the Maine State Housing Authority  
8           and the Department of Human Services, it does increase the number  
10          of people eligible for a low-income home energy assistance  
12          payment. Regardless of the benefit amount, this change has the  
14          effect of increasing the amount of food stamp benefits certain  
16          individuals will qualify for during a limited period during  
18          fiscal year 1995-96.

20           The additional costs to hold a public hearing can be  
22          absorbed by the Legislature utilizing existing budgeted resources.

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## STATEMENT OF FACT

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30           This bill is in response to recent changes in eligibility  
32          standards under the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance  
34          Program, administered by the Maine State Housing Authority, that  
36          have resulted in a reduced benefit level for many Maine citizens  
38          under the federal food stamp program. The bill directs the  
40          authority to extend eligibility under the program on the same  
42          basis as during the 1994-95 heating season. The bill also  
44          directs the Joint Standing Committee on Human Resources to hold a  
46          public hearing on the issues raised by the recent changes by  
48          January 31, 1996 and authorizes the committee to report out  
50          legislation and other recommendations not later than March 1,  
52          1996.