

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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118th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-1997

Legislative Document

No. 1859

H.P. 1311

House of Representatives, May 1, 1997


An Act to Prevent Hunger Among Unemployed Maine Workers.

(AFTER DEADLINE)

(EMERGENCY)

Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 205.

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.


JOSEPH W. MAYO, Clerk

Presented by Representative COLWELL of Gardiner.
Cosponsored by Senator TREAT of Kennebec and
Representatives: BAGLEY of Machias, MADORE of Augusta, McALEVEY of Waterboro,
MITCHELL of Vassalboro, NASS of Acton, WATSON of Farmingdale, Senators:
MacKINNON of York, MICHAUD of Penobscot.

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

4
6 **Whereas,** nearly 3,000 unemployed Maine people have already
lost their food stamp benefits as a result of new federal laws
restricting eligibility for certain individuals who are 18 to 50
8 years of age to 3 months of aid in a 3-year period; and

10 **Whereas,** this loss of benefits will place additional
financial pressure on municipal general assistance programs and
12 already overburdened soup kitchens and food pantries; remove
thousands of federal dollars from the Maine economy; and cause
14 serious hardship for those low-income individuals affected; and

16 **Whereas,** Congress has provided the opportunity for states to
seek waivers of the provision causing ineligibility for these
18 individuals in areas that do not have a sufficient number of jobs
to provide employment for them; and

20 **Whereas,** the State has applied for and received a waiver for
22 only 8 Maine counties and the Penobscot Nation; and

24 **Whereas,** several additional parts of the State and certain
groups of individuals need relief from this provision because
26 there are not sufficient jobs available to them to ensure that
they will be protected from hunger and hardship; and

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

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

36 **Sec. 1. Waiver; areas where and individuals for whom there are**
38 **insufficient jobs.** The Department of Human Services shall seek a
waiver of the requirements of Section 824 (a)(2) of the Personal
40 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996
for areas of the State that do not have a sufficient number of
42 jobs to provide employment for individuals affected by this
provision, including Kennebec County and Penobscot County and the
44 Sanford labor market area. The department shall also seek a
waiver for categories of individuals who have particular
46 difficulty competing for jobs, regardless of where they reside in
the State, including persons without access to reliable
48 transportation; with significant literacy or language barriers;
who are homeless; who are migrant farmworkers; or who lack the
50 necessary skills,

2 education, references or work history to be reasonably expected
4 to find work in the local economy. If the Federal Government
6 does not approve the waiver for the areas and groups of
individuals described in this section, the State shall resubmit a
waiver request for those areas and groups that the United States
Department of Agriculture is most likely to approve.

8 **Sec. 2. Coordination of community service activities.** To the
10 extent that funds are available, including funds that can be
12 matched pursuant to 7 United States Code, Section 2025 (h)(1),
14 the Department of Human Services shall contract with public or
16 private nonprofit agencies to assist in the creation,
18 administration or supervision of volunteer community service
20 activities for current or former food stamp recipients who would
22 otherwise lose eligibility for benefits under Section 824 (a)(2)
of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
Reconciliation Act of 1996, except that a public or private
nonprofit agency shall provide any funds that are required to
match these additional federal dollars. For purposes of this
section, a volunteer community service activity is any activity
that the host agency determines will assist that agency in
delivering services or increase the volunteer's ability to become
self-sufficient.

24 **Sec. 3. Impact evaluation.** The Department of Human Services
26 shall establish a method to identify and locate all persons who
28 lose eligibility for federal food stamps under Section 824 of the
30 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act
32 of 1996 and shall obtain an appropriate independent evaluation of
34 the social and economic impact of the loss of food stamps on
these individuals, municipalities and the Maine economy. The
results of this evaluation must be made available to the Joint
Standing Committee on Health and Human Services by February 1998.

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

38 SUMMARY

40 The new federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
42 Reconciliation Act of 1996 limits food stamp program eligibility
44 for certain unemployed individuals to 3 months in a 3-year
46 period. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
48 Reconciliation Act of 1996 authorizes the United States
Department of Agriculture to grant waivers of this provision to
states for areas that do not have a sufficient number of jobs for
individuals subject to this provision. Maine has already
received a waiver for 8 counties and the Penobscot Nation. This
50 bill requires the department to

2 seek a waiver of 3 additional areas on the basis of insufficient
3 jobs: Kennebec County and Penobscot County and the Sanford labor
4 market area. It also instructs the department to seek a waiver
5 for certain categories of individuals who, because of particular
6 hardships, are unlikely to find jobs.

7
8 Additionally, this bill requires the Department of Human
9 Services to coordinate with other public and nonprofit agencies
10 to develop and supervise volunteer placements for persons who
11 would otherwise become ineligible for food stamps. Finally, it
12 requires the department to arrange for an independent evaluation
13 of the social and economic impact of this new provision on
14 individuals losing assistance, municipalities and the Maine
economy.