

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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119th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1999

Legislative Document

No. 1879

S.P. 657

In Senate, March 16, 1999

An Act to Increase Access to Basic Needs for Low-income Maine Children and Families.

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy J. O'Brien".

JOY J. O'BRIEN
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator RAND of Cumberland.
Cosponsored by Representative TOWNSEND of Portland and
Senators: CATHCART of Penobscot, MITCHELL of Penobscot, PARADIS of Aroostook,
Representatives: BRAGDON of Bangor, DUGAY of Cherryfield, KANE of Saco,
KNEELAND of Easton, Speaker ROWE of Portland.

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

2
3 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3769-B**, as enacted by PL 1997, c. 643, Pt.
4 VV, §1, is amended to read:

6 **§3769-B. Assistance in meeting basic needs**

8 ~~Beginning July 1, 1998, the department shall increase the~~
9 ~~maximum amount of TANF assistance by an amount equal to 5% of the~~
10 ~~maximum payments that were in effect on January 1, 1998 and shall~~
11 ~~increase the standard of need to maintain the same differential~~
12 ~~between the maximum payment and the standard of need that was in~~
13 ~~effect on January 1, 1998.~~

14 ~~1.---Limitation.---The assistance increase required by this~~
15 ~~section does not apply to assistance units with earned income~~
16 ~~disregarded pursuant to department rule or section 3762,~~
17 ~~subsection 3, paragraph B, subparagraph (7).~~

20 1-A. Benchmark; evaluation. The purpose of TANF is to
21 permit low-income families with children sufficient income to
22 meet their most basic needs. The average TANF benefit in other
23 New England states is the initial benchmark that must be met to
24 satisfy this purpose. When this benchmark is reached, the
25 department shall conduct a study, including opportunity for
26 public comment, to determine whether benefits are sufficient to
27 meet families' basic needs. The department shall report the
28 results of this study to the joint standing committee of the
29 Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services
30 matters.

32 1-B. Assistance required to reach benchmark. Beginning
33 July 1, 2000, and each year on July 1st after that date, the
34 department shall increase the maximum amount of TANF assistance
35 by an amount equal to 5% of the maximum payments that were in
36 effect on December 31st of the previous year and shall increase
37 the standard of need to maintain the same difference between the
38 maximum payment and the standard of need that was in effect on
39 January 1, 1999. Annual increases pursuant to this subsection
40 may not occur in any year in which the maximum amount of TANF
41 assistance for a family of 3 is at least equal to the average of
42 the other New England states' maximum amount of TANF assistance
43 for a family of 3. If another state has more than one maximum
44 amount for a family of 3, the department shall use the maximum
45 amount applied to the largest number of families in that state.

46 **2. Determination of eligibility.** In determining
47 eligibility for TANF benefits for applicants after July 1, 1998,
48 the department shall use the gross income pretest in effect on
49 January 1, 1998.
50

2 **3. Coordination with special housing allowance.** The
3 assistance increase required by this section does not decrease
4 the special housing allowance payment under section 3762,
5 subsection 3, paragraph B, subparagraph (6) to assistance units
6 that have received the special housing allowance without
7 interruption since June 1998.

8

SUMMARY

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11 This bill provides an annual increase of 5% in the maximum
12 amount of assistance available to low-income families with
13 children under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program
14 until the maximum amount of TANF assistance for a family of 3 is
15 at least equal to the average of the other New England states'
16 maximum amount of TANF assistance for a family of 3.