## MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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## 125th MAINE LEGISLATURE

## **FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2011**

H.P. 773

**Legislative Document** 

House of Representatives, March 10, 2011

Resolve, To Create a Working Group To Make Recommendations To Improve the Efficiency, Accountability and Proper Administration of Municipal General Assistance Programs

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

HEATHER J.R. PRIEST Clerk

Presented by Representative ROTUNDO of Lewiston.

Cosponsored by Senator ROSEN of Hancock and

Representatives: CAREY of Lewiston, EVES of North Berwick, MARTIN of Eagle Lake, PETERSON of Rumford, SANBORN of Gorham, STRANG BURGESS of Cumberland,

WEBSTER of Freeport, Senator: CRAVEN of Androscoggin.

- **Sec. 1. Working group established. Resolved:** That the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee shall convene a working group to study and make recommendations related to the administration of the general assistance programs under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, chapter 1161. The commissioner or the commissioner's designee shall convene the first meeting of the working group no later than October 30, 2011, and the working group shall elect a chair from among its members; and be it further
- **Sec. 2. Working group members. Resolved:** That the working group consists of 9 members:
  - 1. The Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee;
- 2. Four members representing general assistance applicants and recipients from the following organizations invited by the commissioner or the commissioner's designee:
  - A. A statewide nonprofit legal services organization that provides representation with legislative and administrative advocacy to low-income persons;
  - B. A faith-based ecumenical organization representing multiple denominations;
  - C. An organization representing the interests of persons who are homeless; and
- D. A statewide nonprofit legal services organization that provides free legal services, including representation in general assistance matters, to low-income persons; and
- 3. Four members representing the interests of municipalities or other entities administering a general assistance program invited by the commissioner or the commissioner's designee:
  - A. A representative of the municipality administering the largest number of people served under general assistance programs in the State;
  - B. A representative of a rural municipality;

- C. A representative of a statewide organization representing the interests of general assistance administrators; and
- D. A representative of an entity administering general assistance on behalf of a municipality or municipalities; and be it further
- **Sec. 3. Selection of members. Resolved:** That, no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve, the organizations described in section 2 shall notify the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee of the members selected for participation in the working group; and be it further
- **Sec. 4. Duties. Resolved:** That the working group shall:
- 1. Examine the administration of general assistance programs throughout the State and the extent to which the programs are administered properly and in accordance with law;

- 2. Examine the efficiency of general assistance programs, including the extent to which applicants and recipients receive assistance in accessing other sources of assistance for which they are eligible;
- 3. Study the extent to which appropriate records related to the administration of general assistance are maintained;
- 4. Determine the opportunity for electronic data exchange between municipalities and the Department of Health and Human Services to verify eligibility factors for general assistance applicants and promote program integrity;
- 5. Study methods to improve program accountability both with respect to general assistance applicants and recipients and to the administration of general assistance programs; and
- 6. Recommend changes determined by the working group that will improve the efficiency, accountability and proper administration of general assistance programs; and be it further
- **Sec. 5. Notice to Legislature. Resolved:** That the chair of the working group shall provide written notice of meetings and copies of any minutes of meetings of the working group to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee and to members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services and the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis; and be it further
- **Sec. 6. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than February 15, 2012, the working group shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee, who shall report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. The Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services is authorized to introduce a bill related to the subject matter of the report to the Second Regular Session of the 125th Legislature upon receipt of the report.

27 SUMMARY

 This resolve directs the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to convene a working group to examine municipal general assistance programs. The commissioner is directed to report to the Second Regular Session of the 125th Legislature with its findings and suggested legislation. The working group is directed to examine the administration and efficiency of the programs, to study the administration of appropriate records and to determine the opportunity for electronic data exchange between municipalities and the Department of Health and Human Services to verify eligibility factors and to promote program integrity.