

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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128th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2017

Legislative Document

No. 909

H.P. 637

House of Representatives, March 7, 2017

**An Act To Stimulate the Maine Economy and Alleviate Child
Poverty by Indexing Certain Benefits to Inflation**

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative MELARAGNO of Auburn.

Cosponsored by Representatives: COLLINGS of Portland, COOPER of Yarmouth, GATTINE of Westbrook, HAMANN of South Portland, HARLOW of Portland, LAWRENCE of South Berwick, MOONEN of Portland.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3769-C, sub-§1**, as amended by PL 2001, c. 439, Pt. CC, §1
3 and PL 2003, c. 689, Pt. B, §6, is further amended to read:

4 **1. Amount of assistance.** It is the goal of this section to provide low-income
5 families with children sufficient income to meet their most basic needs. If the
6 commissioner determines that unexpended funds are available within the Department of
7 Health and Human Services state or federal ASPIRE or TANF accounts, the
8 commissioner may, by rule, use those funds to increase the maximum levels of assistance
9 in the TANF Program.

10 A. Beginning October 1, 2001, the department shall use unexpended funds in the
11 TANF program to increase the maximum amount of TANF assistance by an amount
12 equal to 5% of the maximum payments that were in effect on January 1, 2001, and
13 shall increase the standard of need to maintain the same differential between the
14 maximum payment and the standard of need that was in effect on January 1, 2001.
15 Initial applicants for assistance may not become eligible for assistance as a result of
16 any increase in the standard of need required by this paragraph.

17 B. Beginning with the 2004-2005 fiscal biennium, the commissioner must continue
18 the 5% benefit increase provided for in paragraph A in the department's current
19 services budget request for the TANF block grant.

20 C. Beginning October 1, 2017, the department shall adjust the maximum amount of
21 monthly TANF assistance under paragraph B by an amount equal to the percentage
22 increase, if any, in the Consumer Price Index between 2001 and 2017 rounded to the
23 nearest dollar.

24 D. Beginning January 1, 2018, and on each January 1st thereafter, the department
25 shall adjust the maximum amount of monthly TANF assistance under paragraph C by
26 an amount equal to the percentage increase, if any, in the Consumer Price Index.

27 For purposes of this subsection, "Consumer Price Index" means the Consumer Price
28 Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, CPI-W, for the Northeast Region,
29 or its successor index, as published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of
30 Labor Statistics or its successor agency.

31 **SUMMARY**

32 This bill provides that, beginning October 1, 2017, if there are available unexpended
33 funds, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services must increase the maximum
34 monthly assistance amount under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program
35 by the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index between 2001 and 2017 and must
36 further increase the monthly assistance amount on January 1, 2018 and annually every
37 January 1st thereafter by the percentage increase, if any, in the Consumer Price Index.