

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 1877

H.P. 1202

House of Representatives, May 3, 2023

**An Act to Reduce the Number of Children Living in Deep Poverty
by Adjusting Assistance for Low-income Families**

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


ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative MEYER of Eliot.
Cosponsored by Senator INGWERSEN of York and
Representatives: CRAVEN of Lewiston, RANA of Bangor, ROBERTS of South Berwick,
SHAGOURY of Hallowell, SUPICA of Bangor.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3762, sub-§3, ¶B**, as corrected by RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §176,
3 is amended by amending subparagraph (1) to read:

4 (1) To continue the pass-through of the first \$50 per month of current child support
5 collections and the exclusion of the \$50 pass-through from the budget tests and
6 benefit calculations through September 30, 2023. Beginning October 1, 2023, to
7 continue the pass-through of the first \$100 per month of current child support
8 collections for families with one child and the first \$200 per month of current child
9 support collections for families with more than one child, and the exclusion of the
10 pass-through amounts described in this subparagraph from the budget tests and
11 benefit calculations;

12 **Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §3762, sub-§3, ¶B**, as corrected by RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §176,
13 is amended by amending subparagraph (6) to read:

14 (6) To provide a special housing allowance for TANF families whose shelter
15 expenses for rent, mortgage or similar payments, homeowners insurance and
16 property taxes equal or exceed 50% of their monthly income excluding any income
17 disregarded pursuant to subparagraph (7-D), divisions (a) and (b). ~~The special~~
18 ~~housing allowance is limited to~~ in an amount not less than \$300 per month for each
19 family. For purposes of this subparagraph, "monthly income" means the total of
20 the TANF monthly benefit and all income countable under the TANF program,
21 plus child support received by the family, excluding ~~the \$50~~ any pass-through
22 payment payments;

23 **Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §3762, sub-§3, ¶B**, as corrected by RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §176,
24 is amended by enacting a new subparagraph (7-G) to read:

25 (7-G) To provide a clothing allowance for all TANF households 3 times each
26 calendar year. A clothing allowance must be no less than \$100 per TANF
27 household member and must be paid directly to a TANF household;

28 **Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §3769-C, sub-§1**, as amended by PL 2017, c. 284, Pt.
29 NNNNNN, §11, is further amended to read:

30 **1. Amount of assistance.** It is the goal of this section to provide low-income families
31 with children sufficient income to ~~meet their most basic needs~~ live with economic stability
32 and secure access to health care, based on reliable market data. If the commissioner
33 determines that unexpended funds are available within the Department of Health and
34 Human Services state or federal ASPIRE or TANF accounts, the commissioner may, by
35 rule, use those funds to increase the maximum levels of assistance and adjust the standard
36 of need in the TANF program.

37 C. Beginning October 1, ~~2017~~ 2023, the department shall increase the maximum
38 amount of monthly TANF assistance ~~by an amount equal to 20% of the maximum~~
39 ~~payments that were in effect on January 1, 2017~~ to 60% of the federal poverty level
40 and shall increase the standard of need to maintain the same differential between the
41 maximum payment and the standard of need that was in effect on January 1, 2017 by
42 the same proportional amount as the difference between the maximum amount in effect
43 on January 1, 2023 and the amount described by this subsection.

1 D. Beginning October 1, ~~2018~~ 2024 and for each year thereafter, the department shall
2 increase the maximum amount of monthly TANF assistance by an amount equal to or
3 greater than the increase, if any, in the cost of living and shall increase the standard of
4 need to maintain the same differential between the maximum payment and the standard
5 of need that was in effect on January 1, ~~2017~~ 2024. The increase in the cost of living
6 for each year must equal the percentage increase, if any, in the federal supplemental
7 security income program for that year.

8 **Sec. 5. 22 MRSA §3788, sub-§5**, as amended by PL 1997, c. 530, Pt. A, §26, is
9 further amended by enacting a new first blocked paragraph to read:

10 The department may not require verification of the use of payments for support services
11 made to eligible individuals.

12 **Sec. 6. 22 MRSA §3788, sub-§5-A** is enacted to read:

13 **5-A. Provision of transportation-related support services.** The department shall
14 provide payment for transportation support services to ASPIRE-TANF participants to
15 assist participants in maintaining their own vehicles or in accessing alternative
16 transportation necessary for the individual to participate in the activities agreed to in the
17 family contract.

18 A. An ASPIRE-TANF participant who owns a vehicle and requires that vehicle in
19 order to participate in activities agreed to in the family contract is eligible for
20 transportation-related support services in an amount at least sufficient to assist the
21 participant in maintaining automobile liability insurance and in paying for repairs to
22 the vehicle. The department shall provide a standardized payment for these services to
23 eligible participants promptly upon the establishment of a family contract in which it
24 is verified by the participant that the participant owns a vehicle that is necessary to
25 participate in activities included in that family contract. The department may limit the
26 payment for transportation-related support services in this subsection to once per
27 calendar year.

28 B. An ASPIRE-TANF participant who requires a vehicle to attend activities agreed to
29 in the family contract is eligible for transportation-related support services to pay for
30 fuel necessary to participate in the activities agreed to in the family contract.
31 Participants are eligible to receive the payments required under this paragraph upon the
32 establishment of a family contract in which it is verified by the participant that the
33 participant requires the use of a vehicle to participate in activities included in the family
34 contract. The department shall calculate the mileage reimbursement amount for which
35 the participant is eligible based on the distance traveled to and from activities listed in
36 the family contract, including any travel necessary to accommodate child care
37 arrangements. The department shall make this payment on a monthly basis and may
38 not make the payment as a reimbursement.

39 **Sec. 7. Revised state plan for support collection and establishment of**
40 **paternity.** No later than October 1, 2023, the Department of Health and Human Services
41 shall submit a revised State Plan for Support Collection and Establishment of Paternity
42 under Title IV-D of the United States Social Security Act indicating a pass-through amount
43 under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program of \$100 for families with one
44 child and \$200 for families with more than one child. The State shall also elect to participate

1 in the pass-through provisions of families that formerly received assistance as permitted
2 under Title IV-D, section 457(a)(6)(A) of the United States Social Security Act.

3 **SUMMARY**

4 This bill changes the policy goal of the provision of assistance to low-income families
5 to allow those families to live with economic stability and secure access to health care,
6 based on reliable market data. The bill adjusts the standard of need for assistance and the
7 maximum amount of monthly assistance to a standard and amount based on the federal
8 poverty level. The bill increases the pass-throughs of child support collections. The bill
9 provides for a clothing allowance and payment for certain transportation support services
10 and sets a lower limit on the amount of the special housing allowance for families receiving
11 assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. The bill prohibits
12 the Department of Health and Human Services from requiring verification of the use of
13 payments for support services.