



# Legislative Update

**This year, in the Maine Legislature, there are many legislative proposals that would harm people in need of public benefit programs.**

The Governor's budget proposes a number of harmful cuts to MaineCare, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the General Assistance Program (GA). Some law makers have also proposed bills that would cut these important programs.

**Please help us send a message that cuts to these programs will hurt people and are not the answer.**

## HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **Come to a rally on Monday, March 7th at 9:30 a.m., 2nd floor of the State House in the Hall of Flags.** *Come early to get a parking spot and get in building!*
- **Come share your story with legislators on Monday, March 7th at 10:00 a.m. in the State House, Room 228.**
- **Share your story with us so we can share it with legislators.**
- **Contact us to learn about other ways you can help.**

Sharing real life experiences puts a human face on poverty and helps to counter the myths about public benefit programs. It is so important that legislators hear from real families who know firsthand about these programs and what it takes to make ends meet.



**Will you or someone you know be affected by any of the following proposals?**

## Proposed Cuts to the TANF Program:

- (1) **Proposal: Imposes a strict lifetime 5-year time limit in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF).** This would place a lifetime cap on the length of time families can receive assistance from the TANF program. Those families who have received benefits for 5 years in total as of July 1, 2011 may qualify for an additional 6 months of assistance only if their case manager decides to make an exception. After this time period, families will not be able to receive assistance even if they are not able to work.
- (2) **Proposal: Imposes sanctions against the entire family, including children, if a parent does not fully follow TANF/ASPIRE program rules.** Currently, if a parent is unable to participate 20 hours (if children are under 5) or 30 hours (if children are over 5) per week in ASPIRE and DHHS determines they do not have good cause, the parent is sanctioned and loses their part of the TANF grant. The children continue to receive their part of the TANF benefit. The proposal is to cut off all TANF to the entire household when a parent is sanctioned.

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**(3) Proposal: Makes Alternative Aid available only once in a lifetime.** Currently, someone who is eligible can receive Alternative Aid once a year.

Please let us know if one of the following applies to you or someone you know who has received or is receiving TANF:

- You have received TANF for at least 5 years (could be on and off the program) because of your particular life circumstances (like coping with a disability in your family); **OR**
- You think you may need to receive TANF for more than 5 years because of your particular life circumstances (like problems holding onto jobs because of a lack of affordable child care); **OR**
- You have been sanctioned unfairly while on the TANF program because of disability issues, or problems with child care or transportation; **OR**
- You have used Alternative Aid one or more times and can talk about how it helped you keep your job so that you didn't have to turn to TANF.

### **Proposed cuts to General Assistance (GA):**

- (1) Proposal:** There are several proposals to increase the amount of time from 120 to 180 days that you are not allowed to get help from GA because you violated program rules. For example, a person who quits a job would be unable to get GA for 180 days instead of 120.
- (2) Proposal:** There is also a proposal to disqualify GA applicants from receiving help for 120 days if they have abandoned a resource, like a subsidized housing, without good cause. Applicants would be disqualified for something they did in the past with no knowledge of how it would affect their eligibility for GA in the future.

Please let us know if one of the following applies to you or someone you know who has received or is receiving General Assistance:

Our biggest concern about these proposals is the fact that GA is not always administered according to the law in all municipalities in Maine. For example, good cause could be found in one town, but not another under the same set of circumstances. We are looking for the following kinds of situations to make that point:

- You tried to get help from your town but were not even allowed to fill out an application for GA, you were told that you couldn't apply for several days or weeks, or you were sent to another town to apply; **OR**
- You were illegally denied GA, or had "good cause" for something that was ignored; **OR**
- You left a resource (in or outside of Maine) and moved to another Maine town where you applied for GA. For example, you lived in subsidized housing in another state but left to move to Maine to get your children away from a gang or to escape domestic violence.

### **Proposed Cuts to MaineCare:**

**(1) Proposal: Reduces eligibility for MaineCare for parents from 200% to 133% of the federal poverty level (FPL).** No new parents within these income levels will be able to enroll. Those within these income limits who are already getting MaineCare can keep coverage, but if they lose eligibility, even temporarily, they cannot return to the program. Many of these parents are currently paying a premium for their children so they may be easy to identify that way. (Parents whose incomes are below 133% of FPL will continue to have MaineCare coverage if their income does not increase.)

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- (2) Proposal: Applies new premiums equal to 4% of household income for all people with income over 150% FPL. This includes children, parents, seniors and people with disabilities. These are people getting health care services through MaineCare, Katie Beckett, the Medicare Savings Program, Drugs for the Elderly and Long Term Care.** Currently, MaineCare families with incomes between 150% and 200% FPL pay some of the highest premiums in the country for their coverage.

Please let us know if one of the following applies to you or someone you know **who has received or is receiving MaineCare:**

- You are a parent whose income fluctuates above and below 133% of FPL. Perhaps you work per diem for a home care agency, or get more hours or fewer hours in the summer; **OR**
- You live in a two-parent household where one parent works seasonally and the temporary income (or lack of income) will cause both parents to lose MaineCare coverage; **OR**
- You are a parent with income below 133% FPL who has MaineCare now but fears that taking another job or adding additional work hours would cause you to lose your MaineCare; **OR**
- Your income is over 150% FPL and you receive health care services through MaineCare, Katie Beckett, the Medicare Savings Program, Drugs for the Elderly or Long Term Care.

### **Proposed Cuts for People New to the State:**

**Proposal: Eliminates eligibility for MaineCare, TANF, the Food Supplement Program (formerly called Food Stamps) and SSI benefits for legal immigrants during the first five years of residency in Maine.** In addition, certain refugees could be left without SSI benefits after seven years of receiving assistance.

Please let us know if one of the following applies to you or someone you know **who has received or is receiving public benefits during the first five years as a legal resident of Maine:**

- You are a legal permanent resident who moved to this country within the last five years and you or your family would experience significant hardship without the assistance of MaineCare, TANF, Food Supplement and/or SSI benefits; **OR**
- You have been in the country *more than five years* and the support from these programs helped you to build a life for yourself or your family in this country.



### ***Show Up! Oppose these cuts!***

Your presence at the March 7th rally will make a difference. It doesn't matter whether you or someone you know will be affected. We must turn out in numbers to show lawmakers that *people need to come before politics*. These proposed cuts are not the answer.

If you are willing to share your story or get involved please contact us toll-free at (866) 626-7059, ext. 205 for Crystal Bond or ext. 204 for Chris Rusnov.

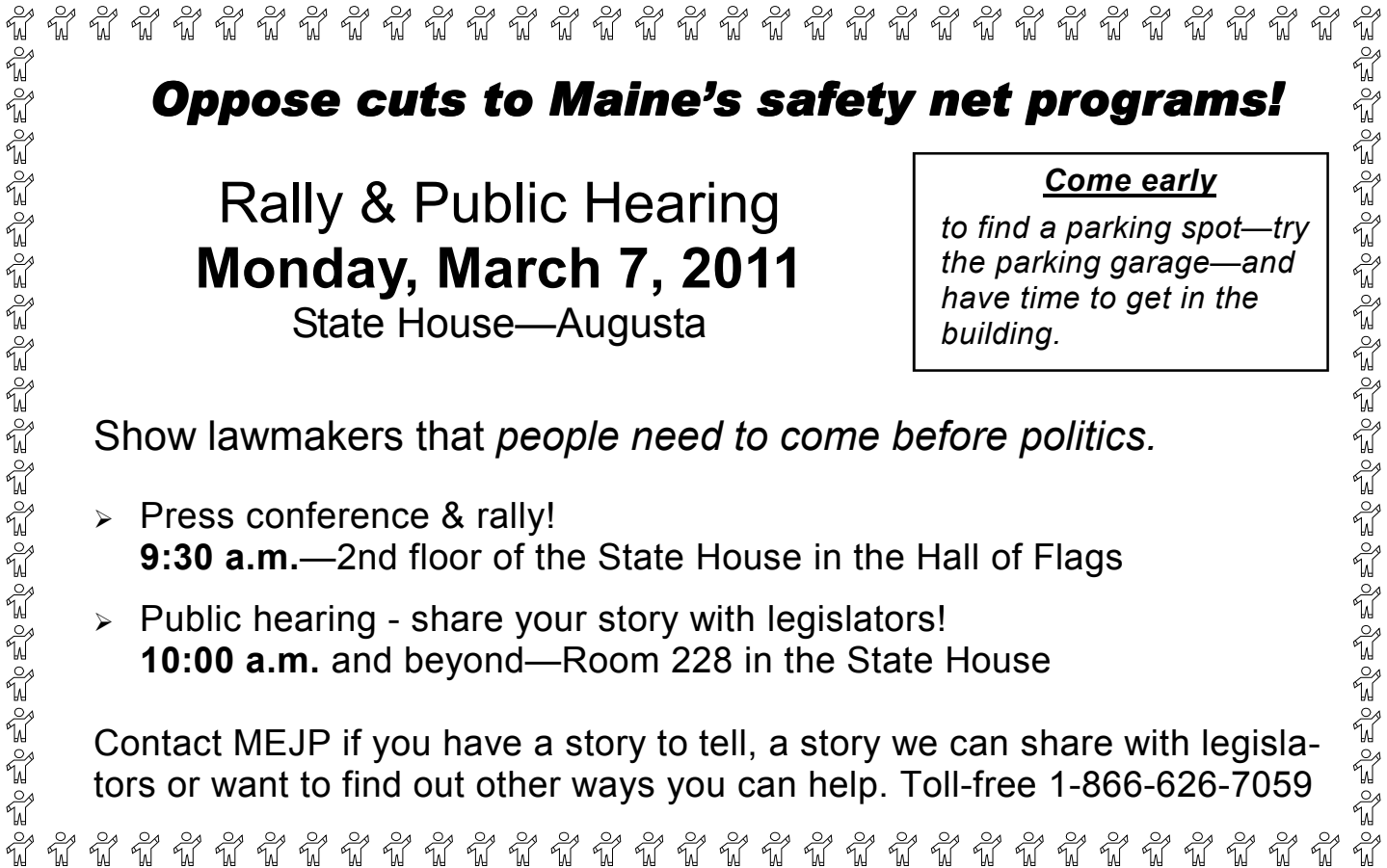
Thank you.

*Your voice CAN make a difference!*



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## ***Oppose cuts to Maine's safety net programs!***

**Rally & Public Hearing**  
**Monday, March 7, 2011**  
State House—Augusta

**Come early**  
*to find a parking spot—try  
the parking garage—and  
have time to get in the  
building.*

Show lawmakers that *people need to come before politics.*

- Press conference & rally!  
**9:30 a.m.**—2nd floor of the State House in the Hall of Flags
- Public hearing - share your story with legislators!  
**10:00 a.m.** and beyond—Room 228 in the State House

Contact MEJP if you have a story to tell, a story we can share with legislators or want to find out other ways you can help. Toll-free 1-866-626-7059