

Resolve 8- 10/11
Passed 8-0 (Leeman absent)
2/7/11

NICHOLAS M. MAVODONES (MAYOR)
KEVIN J. DONOGHUE (1)
DAVID A. MARSHALL (2)
EDWARD J. SUSLOVIC (3)
CHERYL A. LEEMAN (4)

CITY OF PORTLAND
IN THE CITY COUNCIL

JOHN R. COYNE (5)
JOHN M. ANTON (A/L)
DORY RICHARDS WAXMAN (A/L)
JILL C. DUSON (A/L)

CITY OF PORTLAND
IN THE CITY COUNCIL

Resolution Supporting Universal Standards for the Administration of General Assistance

Whereas: State law requires all towns and municipalities to administer General Assistance, which provides immediate aid to individuals who meet eligibility requirements and are unable to provide basic necessities essential to maintain themselves or their family; and

Whereas: As a result of the recent economic downturn and loss of employment opportunities, the City's General Assistance Program has experienced a substantial increase in both the number of applications for assistance and the number of unduplicated individuals receiving assistance. During the last full fiscal year, the City's General Assistance Program processed twenty thousand applications and provided assistance for basic necessities to more than forty-four hundred individuals; and

Whereas: The City is required by state law to provide General Assistance, but also has an obligation to Portland taxpayers to be good stewards of public resources; and

Whereas: The City has long been seen as a leader in the development of universal standards for the administration of General Assistance designed to facilitate appropriate and timely eligibility determination; and

Whereas: The General Assistance Program is the final safety net for Portland's low-income and homeless population and is an integral part of the City's Department of Health & Human Services mission which is to enhance the health and well being of the residents of Portland in collaboration with our community, state, and federal partners; and

Whereas: The City of Portland is committed to helping families and individuals attain financial security through employment, education and training, and housing stability, and General Assistance is an important tool available to the city in its efforts to assist those in need as they strive to become self reliant; and

Whereas: There are several proposed bills before the 125th Maine Legislature that have the potential to barriers to the administration of General Assistance, the State's Safety Net Program, and add financial burden to Maine's service center communities;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that I, Mayor Nicholas M. Mavodones, and the Members of the Portland City Council do urge the 125th State Legislature and the Governor to consider incorporating the following guiding principles, which the City of Portland adheres to when administering General Assistance, when evaluating possible changes to the State's General Assistance law:

- Minimum standards for the administration of General Assistance should promote uniformity, efficiency and transparency, and should be adopted prior to making major substantive changes to the state statute
- General Assistance should be accessible to all residents who have no other options for providing basic necessities for themselves or their family
- General Assistance decisions regarding eligibility should be based solely on need and, if eligible, assistance should be provided within twenty-four hours of the completion of an application
- General Assistance should be available during non-business hours and an emergency phone number should be posted in a public area and made available to community providers
- General Assistance eligibility determination decisions should be made based upon verification of all income and assets, including Department of Health and Human Services benefits, and other state and federal resources
- Verification of available resources should be done through the use of electronic data exchange whenever possible
- General Assistance should include a Workfare provision for all able bodied individuals
- General Assistance should encourage all recipients to pursue other Mainstream resources that may be available to them including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Social Security, and Federal Food Stamps
- General Assistance residency requirements should be based upon current law which states that the municipality of residence for an individual seeking General Assistance is responsible for accepting and reviewing the resident's application and, if eligible, granting assistance
- General Assistance should promote accountability and focus on self sufficiency and self reliance by assisting applicants to access support services and employment programs.