



## Maine Equal Justice 2024 Legislative Priorities

These are Maine Equal Justice's legislative priorities for the 2024 "short" legislative session, which runs roughly from January through April. Updates to these priority bills to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity will be posted at [maineequaljustice.org/get-involved/legislative-priorities/](https://maineequaljustice.org/get-involved/legislative-priorities/). You can advocate alongside us by signing up at [maineequaljustice.org/take-action/](https://maineequaljustice.org/take-action/)!

### **Housing:**

LD 1710 (carried over) - An Act to Enact the Housing Opportunity for Maine (The HOME Act) (Sponsor: Rep. Cheryl Golek) *Staff contact:* [astewart@mejp.org](mailto:astewart@mejp.org)

Maine continues to experience a severe housing crisis. Rents are too high and cities and towns can't solve growing housing problems on their own, while the state has a surplus, and expertise that could help. Rent relief under LD 1710 helps people who need it the most, who are not being helped by other federal or state programs, and can quickly reduce evictions while more homes are built and protect tenants from discrimination based on their source of income.

### **General Assistance:**

LD 1732 - An Act to Expand the General Assistance Program (Sponsor: Rep. Michele Meyer) *Staff contact:* [dmalual@mejp.org](mailto:dmalual@mejp.org)

Maine Equal Justice supports changes to the General Assistance (GA) program that would make it more responsive to the needs of Mainers with the lowest incomes accessing it as a "safety net of last resort." GA should be accessible to everyone in Maine who needs it, no matter their city or town, or their background. LD 1732 would increase training for administrators and make structural improvements to the program. We also support a long-term rent relief program (see LD 1710) as a necessary policy change to take pressure off of GA, as the Mainers with the lowest incomes and highest risk of eviction and becoming homeless often do not have any other rental support available to them.

### **Income Solutions:**

LD 1877 (carried over) - An Act to Reduce the Number of Children Living in Deep Poverty in Maine (Sponsor: Rep. Michele Meyer) *Staff contact:* [adanforth@mejp.org](mailto:adanforth@mejp.org)

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program provides a safety net for low-income families in Maine. But at current benefit levels, most families receiving TANF can't afford rising rents and rising costs for essentials. LD 1877 would increase

benefits to provide more financial security to Maine families and help more parents access transportation to work, training, and education opportunities so they can move their families beyond survival and thrive.

### **Health Care:**

**Continuing work: Remove exclusions in the MaineCare program** *Staff contact:*

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Maine is a stronger, healthier, and more resilient state when everyone has health care, including our family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers who are immigrants. We will continue to advocate for policy change to ensure all Maine residents with low income have access to MaineCare coverage, and Maine has a health care system that is equitable and works for all of us.

### **Changing Systems that Cause Racial Inequity:**

**LD 2007 - An Act to Advance Self Determination for Wabanaki Nations (Sponsor: Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross)** *Staff contact:* [dmalual@mejp.org](mailto:dmalual@mejp.org)

Advancing self determination for Maine's tribes is necessary for racial equity. LD 2007 would implement consensus recommendations from a bipartisan task force convened by the Maine Legislature to address long-standing issues with the land claims act passed in 1980 that governs the relationship between the state and the tribes in Maine.

**LD 1432 - An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Racial Impact Statements (Sponsor: Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross)** *Staff contact:* [dmalual@mejp.org](mailto:dmalual@mejp.org)

Racial impact statements (RIS) give policymakers information about racial disparities to allow them to consider the impact of future laws on racial, indigenous, and tribal populations. An RIS pilot program in the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session provided valuable information about the ways these statements can support equitable policymaking and the process for using RIS to support our legislative process. LD 1432 builds off the pilot program to ensure legislators have the information they need to craft equitable policies.

### **Access to civil legal aid:**

**Increasing access to civil legal aid in the Supplemental Budget** *Staff contact:*

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Civil legal aid addresses the legal needs of people facing eviction, domestic violence, elder abuse and exploitation, navigating a complex immigration process, and barriers to health care and public benefits to meet basic needs. The demand for legal aid continues to increase, and too many Mainers face instability when their needs cannot be met by current staffing at civil legal aid organizations. Last year, the Legislature appropriated \$4 million in one-time funding for civil legal aid. Making this temporary funding an ongoing commitment in the Supplemental Budget will allow legal aid organizations to sustain and build capacity to meet the legal needs of Mainers with low incomes.