



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In support of LD 1324

Resolve, To Establish the Committee to Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic Income Security

April 3, 2019

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: my name is Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am pleased to speak to you today in support of LD 1324, Resolve, *To Establish the Committee to Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic Income Security*.

For over forty years, our organization has focused on four key policy areas: freedom from violence, freedom from discrimination, access to health care, and the overarching issue that informs the others: economic security. We believe that studying the feasibility of a universal basic income system in Maine supports each of these areas and can be a path toward elevating the economic security of Maine women and families.

Women disproportionately live in poverty in Maine. There are a number of reasons for women's relative poverty. Women are likely to be paid less than their male counterparts and women are more likely to work in inflexible, low-wage jobs without benefits. One of the lesser discussed side effects of domestic or sexual violence is poverty that lasts long after the violence has ended. We are also more likely to be single or custodial parents, as well as the primary caretaker for aging parents or disabled family members. Nearly 60% of children living in poverty in Maine live in households headed by single women.

A universal basic income could be the step up that a single parent needs to complete their education and position themselves for a better job and increased economic security. Universal basic income could make leaving an abusive partner easier and safer. According to the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence's 2018 survey of Mainers experiencing domestic violence and economic abuse, nearly all respondents (93%) reported that the abuse they experienced affected their ability to meet daily needs

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such as obtaining food, shelter and clothing.ⁱ A modest basic income could make all the difference for survivors of violence and their families.

Studying the feasibility of universal basic income is a critical first step to digging deeper into its potential positive impacts to women, families, and all of Maine. We urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1324. Thank you for your time.

ⁱ "A Report on the Impact of Economic Abuse on Survivors of Domestic Violence in Maine." Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence. 2019. Accessed at https://www.mcedv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Economic-Abuse-Report_FINAL.pdf.

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