



Maine Equal Justice Impact Analysis: Governor's 2019-2020 Budget Proposal

Governor Janet Mills released her budget blueprint for 2019 and 2020 on Feb. 8th. The Governor's budget takes positive steps to ensure Mainers have access to some basic supports and opportunities to succeed. It prioritizes health care, including Medicaid for older Mainers and people with disabilities. It is a 180-degree turn from the harmful policies advanced by the previous administration and a constructive start to the budget negotiation process.

Improving access to health care is the right move for our state and there is much in this budget that will improve the lives of Mainers with low income. Opportunity remains, however, to secure the additional revenue necessary to sustain needed investments in families, communities and our economy in the long term. To help us reach all our goals for an equitable and prosperous future, raising revenue to meet our state's needs should remain on the table.

As the budget process moves forward in the legislature, Maine Equal Justice will also advocate to provide comprehensive dental care under MaineCare and increase funding for civil legal aid to help bridge the justice gap for people with low income. We must take bold steps to advance equity and justice for all Mainers, no matter their background, where they come from, or the color of their skin.

Highlights in the Governor's budget impacting Mainers with low income:

- **Fully funds Medicaid expansion to provide coverage to 70,000 Maine people.**
Provides \$150M in General funds over the next two years in the MaineCare account to implement the law passed by voters in 2017. This means that the will of voters is finally being honored, and Mainers with incomes up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will be able to receive health care.
- **Protects Medicaid coverage for over 5,000 19 and 20-year-olds.**
- **Restores eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program**, a program for older Mainers and people with disabilities that helps cover Medicare cost sharing and prescription drug costs. The budget helps approximately 1,800 Mainers with incomes up to 185% of the FPL. This eligibility had previously been reduced to 175% in 2013 in cost-cutting measures by the prior administration— at the expense of access to needed care.
- **Repeals a TANF drug testing policy** that allowed DHHS to test parents previously convicted of a drug related felony. Persons who tested positive lost assistance unless enrolled in a substance abuse program. The *Portland Press Herald* found in 2017 that, "Since 2015, only 23 people scored high enough on the screening tool to be subjected to testing," only about one tenth of one percent of the total welfare

recipients in Maine. Focusing on treatment is a far more appropriate and effective approach.

- **Improves access to adult education** by providing \$900,000 in education subsidies and grants for innovative practices.
- **Provides funding for additional staff and program capacity for New Ventures Maine** in unserved rural regions of Washington, Hancock, York and Cumberland counties. Also, provides \$435,000 to reach and serve adult learners in attaining Bachelor degrees or workforce credentials.
- **Provides \$3M for the Maine State Grant to assist adult learners** in returning to school and completing their credentials.
- **Provides additional funds for the University and Community College** systems, including \$3M in scholarship funds.
- **Provides \$5.5M to fight the opioid epidemic** through overdose prevention, educational efforts, and expanded access to treatment. Medicaid expansion will also provide access to treatment for tens of thousands of Mainers with a substance use disorder, including those addicted to opioids.