



# Maine Equal Justice

People Policy Solutions

## Support An Act to Reduce Child Poverty by Leveraging Investments so Families can Thrive (LIFT 3.0)

Mainers all have a stake in addressing child poverty

Nearly one in eight Maine children is growing up poor with an average household income of less than \$12,000 a year. One out of every five is food insecure, living in families that worry whether they will have enough to eat. Child poverty weighs all of us down – it challenges our schools, our health care system, our communities, and our economy.

We all want to see Maine children thrive, to strengthen our families, our communities, and our workforce. We can come together to ensure Maine families are can meet their basic needs and have opportunities for good jobs and a brighter future. LIFT 3.0 will help us get there by making the following changes:

- **Improve access to the Parents as Scholars (PaS)** program by allowing schools to enroll low-income parents so they can get a degree or industry-recognized credential, providing a pathway out of poverty and helping to address Maine’s workforce shortage.
- **Significantly reduce the “benefits cliff”** families face when they transition off Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) into employment so families can sustain employment and move out of poverty.
- **Eliminate the “gross income test”** in TANF, which prevents families struggling with poverty from accessing temporary assistance. This would allow more Maine families to meet their basic needs and get help finding a job, education, and training.
- **Establish a Working Group** to make improvements at DHHS to help make government accountable to all of us and ensure that programs are working to help LIFT families out of poverty.
- **Require DHHS to measure and track Maine’s progress** on poverty, food insecurity, and other measures of child well-being.



©2019

### Investing in parents transforms families

*Allina Diaz is working her way through college as a single mom with three kids in the Parents as Scholars program. Allina can see the change in her daughters as they witness her progress in school: “They are seeing it on a daily basis – that education is important, that loving yourself is important, that valuing yourself is important, having a purpose. That is my goal – to be able to stop that cycle and for them to experience life in a different way than I had to.”*

Stay up to date and get action alerts. Contact [jthoyalil@mejp.org](mailto:jthoyalil@mejp.org) or call 207-626-7058

1 The 2018 poverty level for a family of three is \$20,780, however, the mean income deficit for these families is \$9,011. The mean income deficit is the difference in dollars between family income and the family’s poverty threshold meaning that the average for a Maine poverty level family is estimated to be just below \$12,000. U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

2 Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. (n.d.). Hunger | Ending Hunger in Maine. Retrieved November 19, 2018, from <https://www.gsfb.org/hunger-in-maine/>