

State and Local Government Committee  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
Cross Building, Room 214  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD495: *An Act To Improve Income Tax Progressivity by Establishing New Top Individual Income Tax Rates*

Dear Senator Chipman, Representative Terry, and other members of the Committee on Taxation,

We represent NASW Maine in support of LD495. We believe that tax fairness is the very core of social and economic justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the disparities between those with and without financial resources in the state of Maine. Economic activity has slowed, resulting in large job losses and cuts to profits for small businesses. Nonetheless, the state's tax code maintains low taxes for the highest earning households and businesses, prioritizing them over funding for the services that support our working families. The Maine Center for Economic Policy notes that:

- Maine has underfunded its public schools by \$2.54 billion over the last 10 academic years.
- Maine has pushed a \$707 million shortfall onto property taxpayers by failing to fund road maintenance, parks, water treatment, and other local services over that same period.
- Approximately 19% of Maine adults can not afford their monthly living expenses, and 17% of Maine adults could not afford a \$400 emergency expense (e.g. car repair, medical bill).

Long-term solutions are needed to generate revenue that reduces these long-standing inequities and build a stronger Maine economy. Amending the tax code to ask more of the households and businesses that have more to contribute is necessary to ensure opportunity and quality of life for all Mainers.

We have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of these economic disparities as students have gone without internet access during remote learning; as low-wage workers in leisure and hospitality have applied for unemployment at unprecedented rates (JTG Foundation); and as Maine's BIPOC residents have contracted and died of COVID-19 at higher rates than white/Caucasian groups (CDC).

We urge you all to vote "Yes" on LD495.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Blair, MHRT/C  
Policy Committee Co-Chair  
NASW Maine Chapter  
[danielle.blair@maine.edu](mailto:danielle.blair@maine.edu)

Julie M. Schirmer, LCSW  
First Vice President  
NASW Maine Chapter  
[NASWMEChapterVP@gmail.com](mailto:NASWMEChapterVP@gmail.com)

Jerry Marx, PhD  
Executive Director  
NASW Maine Chapter  
[jmarx.naswme@socialworkers.org](mailto:jmarx.naswme@socialworkers.org)

Exact References:

Maine CDC:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/data.shtml>

Maine Center for Economic Policy:

<https://www.mecep.org/taxes-and-budget/tax-policy-options-maine-needs-progressive-revenue-solutions-to-build-a-stronger-fairer-future/>

John T. Gorman Foundation:

<https://www.jtgfoundation.org/2020/07/07/maine-data-glimpse-unemployment/>