

2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT CARD



United Way
of Southern Maine

The 2023 legislative session saw many successes for United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM) and Thrive2027.

Below is a brief report card on each of the bills and issues in which UWSM engaged.

Legislation	Summary	Final Status
HOUSING		
LD 2: An Act to Address Maine's Housing Crisis	Establishes the Housing First Program within the Department of Health and Human Services to facilitate the delivery of stabilization and support services to residents of properties established or developed to provide permanent housing to persons who have been chronically homeless and to fund technical assistance, administered by the Maine State Housing Authority, for the development of housing consistent with the program.	● This bill was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
LD 1074: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New Affordable Housing for Low-income Households	Provides \$100,000,000 to be used to build new affordable housing for low-income households by constructing new structures and adaptive reusing existing structures.	● This bill was carried over to the next session.
LD 258: The Biennial Budget	Provides \$80 million to build more affordable housing in Maine for workers and families.	● \$70 million was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
FINANCIAL STABILITY AND MOBILITY		
LD 18: An Act to Provide Ongoing Funding for up to 2 Years of Community College for Certain Maine Students	Provides ongoing funding for high school graduates and individuals who obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma to receive a waiver of tuition and fees for up to two years in the Maine Community College System.	● The bill was withdrawn after the amount requested in the bill was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
LD 67: An Act to Increase the Number of Educational Professionals by Accepting Out-of-state Certification	Requires the Department of Education to accept a certificate as an administrator, teacher, educational technician, or educational specialist issued by another state, the District of Columbia, a United States territory, or another country as qualification for such a certificate in this State.	● The bill failed in committee.
LD 258: The Biennial Budget	Increases the Maine State Grant Program's maximum award from \$2,500 to \$3,000. The Maine State Grant Program provides need-based grants to Maine undergraduate students to help with the cost of higher education.	● The proposal was not included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.

● Maintained or passed into law

● Pending additional actions

● Not passed

Legislation	Summary	Final Status
LD 258: The Biennial Budget	Provides \$4 million to continue providing student loan repayment assistance to health care professionals in medicine, dentistry, behavioral health, and nursing education. Under this Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan program, eligible health care professionals who work in Maine (or commit to doing so) are eligible for up to \$75,000 in relief for qualifying student loan debt while nursing educators can receive up to \$40,000.	● This proposal was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
LD 258: The Biennial Budget	Provides \$100,000 in ongoing funding to support a coalition of 50 organizations providing free volunteer tax assistance and other financial education services to thousands of low-income individuals and families statewide.	● This proposal was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE		
LD 1726: An Act to Build Maine's Economy by Supporting Child Care for Working Families	Establishes the Maine Child Care Scholarship Program within the Department of Health and Human Services to encompass the former child care subsidy program and new eligibility for child care providers.	● This bill was funded through the budget that was passed and signed into law.
LD 1799: An Act to Expand Maine's High-quality Early Learning and Care for Children by Increasing Public Preschool Opportunities in Communities	Establishes a timeline, implementation plan, and incentives to expand publicly funded preschool programming to 30 hours per week or the length of the local school day at a school administrative unit with the goal of establishing an equitable, mixed delivery public preschool system that provides universal access for preschool-aged children and their families. The bill also establishes a working group of stakeholders to explore expansion to full-day preschool and pathways for child care programs to become publicly funded.	● This bill was funded through the budget that was passed and signed into law.
LD 258: The Biennial Budget	Provides \$58 million in funding to fully fund universal free meals for students in public schools and for publicly funded students in approved private schools.	● This proposal was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
LD 258: The Biennial Budget	Provides \$15 million for foster care and adoption assistance to support increased reimbursement rates to foster families and services that help caregivers of young children to build skills to respond to children's social and emotional needs. This builds on and previous budget initiatives to bridge gaps in the child welfare workforce, implement child welfare recommendations, and improve child safety in Maine.	● This proposal was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.

● Maintained or passed into law

● Pending additional actions

● Not passed

Legislation	Summary	Final Status
URGENT COMMUNITY NEEDS		
LD 3: An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program	Provides relief to certain Maine households to assist them with high costs for home heating as well as to support housing. Part A provides \$71,000,000 to the Maine State Housing Authority. Of this amount, \$40,000,000 is allocated for heating assistance to households in the State eligible for the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; and \$10,000,000 is allocated as emergency funds to households to avert an energy crisis and emergency housing to prevent people from experiencing homelessness during the 2022-2023 winter months.	● This bill passed and was signed into law.
LD 1050: Resolve, Directing the Department of Labor to Request a Federal Waiver to Allow Presumptive Work Eligibility for Asylum Seekers	Directs the Commissioner of Labor to request a waiver from the United States Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to allow an asylum seeker in the State, if the asylum seeker has applied for asylum and has not been denied, eligibility to work in the State for the 6-month period immediately after the asylum seeker has applied for asylum while awaiting a final determination on the asylum seeker's application and for the time period while an asylum seeker's work permit has expired and is pending renewal by the Federal Government.	● This bill passed and was signed into law.

● Maintained or passed into law

● Pending additional actions

● Not passed