

# 2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT CARD



The 2024 legislative session saw many successes for United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM), Thrive2027, and the Southern Maine community. Below is a brief report card on each of the bills and issues in which UWSM engaged.

United Way  
of Southern Maine

Affected Issues	Legislation	Summary	UWSM Action	Final Status
Gun Safety & Mental Health	LD 2237: Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources	This bill creates two “crisis receiving centers” in Maine. These centers are designed to provide immediate help to people facing urgent behavioral health, mental health, and substance use problems. The measure specifically plans to open two such centers, one in Aroostook County and another in Penobscot County. The care at these centers will be culturally sensitive and trauma-informed, meaning they’ll consider the cultural backgrounds and specific needs of the individuals seeking help. The measure also mentions the possibility of expanding these centers to every county in Maine in the future.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● This bill was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Housing / Affordable Housing	LD 2136: An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelters for Unhoused Individuals	The bill appropriates an additional \$10 million to fund existing homeless shelters, addressing a critical need given that state funding for emergency shelters has been stagnant at \$2.5 million for the past decade.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● This bill failed to be included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Housing / Affordable Housing	LD 1505: An Act to Amend the Maine Cooperative Affordable Housing Ownership Act	This bill focuses on affordable housing through the concept of “group equity cooperatives.” In simple terms, a group equity cooperative is a type of affordable housing organization designed specifically for people with low to moderate incomes. The bill sets rules for these cooperatives, ensuring they remain affordable for their target groups. It limits the amount of profit (dividend) these cooperatives can make and specifies that they cannot sell their ownership interests for more than the original price. Additionally, the bill makes sure that housing assistance programs (like financial aid for housing costs and utilities) are available to people living in these cooperatives. It also includes specific guidelines on how these cooperatives and their members should be treated under such assistance programs. In essence, the bill aims to make affordable housing more accessible and sustainable for lower-income groups in Maine by establishing and regulating group equity cooperatives and ensuring they have access to necessary financial assistance programs.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● This bill was signed by the Governor and will take effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns sine die.

● Maintained or passed into law

● Pending additional actions

● Not passed

Affected Issues	Legislation	Summary	UWSM Action	Final Status
Housing / Affordable Housing	LD 1074: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund New Affordable Housing for Low-income Households	The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$100 million, will be used to build new affordable housing for low-income households by constructing new structures and adaptive reusing existing structures.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● This bill failed to be included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Immigration	LD 2167: An Act to Develop Maine's Economy and Strengthen Its Workforce by Establishing an Office of New Americans	This bill establishes the Office of New Americans within the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future and also establishes an advisory council to the Office of New Americans.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● This bill was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Supporting ALICE population and workforce shortage	LD 632: An Act to Amend the Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program	This bill adds to the list of practice areas available for participation in the program. The bill replaces the current priority consideration in the program with one developed by the Finance Authority of Maine with stakeholder input and also requires stakeholder input on changes to the application process. The bill requires a participant to serve residents of this State, increases the number of loans repaid each year to 25, and increases the amount of repayment for each participant to \$20,000.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● The Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee did not take action on this bill and it failed to become law.
Supporting ALICE population and workforce shortage	LD 1718: An Act to Encourage Participation in Maine's Essential Support Workforce Through Access to Higher Education	This bill creates the Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Program to provide up to 4 education vouchers equal to a year's tuition up to \$4,000 at the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System or Maine Maritime Academy for an essential support worker employed in in-home or community support services reimbursed by the MaineCare program or another state program or a family member of the essential support worker. Amendment: This amendment allows an education voucher provided under the Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Program to be used for both the costs of tuition and for expenses related to attendance at an eligible postsecondary educational institution. The amendment also makes technical edits to clarify the administration of the program. It removes the emergency preamble and the emergency clause.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● The Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee did not take action on this bill and it failed to become law.

● Maintained or passed into law

● Pending additional actions

● Not passed

Affected Issues	Legislation	Summary	UWSM Action	Final Status
Child care	LD 2199: An Act to Ensure Subsidy Reimbursements and Emergency Financial Assistance for Certain Child Care Providers	This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to reimburse child care providers for subsidies based on enrollment rather than attendance. The bill also directs the department to create a program to provide short-term, one-time emergency financial assistance to child care providers based on need to support short-term facility or operational costs, and to provide technical assistance to support their financial planning, capacity and stability.	UWSM supported this bill.	● This bill was not signed by the Governor and died upon adjournment.
General Assistance	LD 1732: An Act to Expand the General Assistance Program	This bill requires overseers and designated or appointed municipal officials administering the program to complete training within 120 days of election or appointment. The bill also requires municipalities to accept applications for general assistance during regular business hours. It mandates that general assistance programs must offer services that are both trauma-informed and culturally and linguistically appropriate to all applicants. Trauma-Informed Services are defined as services that recognize the impact of trauma, understand the signs of trauma in clients, families, and staff, integrate this knowledge into their operations to avoid retraumatization, and promote paths for recovery. Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services are those designed to meet the needs of culturally diverse populations in their preferred languages, respect cultural beliefs and behaviors, support diversity, engage the community, build trust, enable informed choices, and facilitate information exchange.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● This bill became law without the Governor's signature and will take effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns sine die.
General Assistance	LD 1664: An Act to Increase Reimbursement Under the General Assistance Program	This bill increases, from 70% to 90%, the amount of state reimbursement for the costs of general assistance incurred by each municipality.	UWSM supported the passage of this bill.	● The Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee did not take action on this bill and it failed to become law.

## INITIATIVES FROM THE PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET SUPPORTED BY UWSM

Initiative	Summary	UWSM Action	Final Status
Office of New Americans (Part FF)	Proposes the establishment of the Office of New Americans, focusing on integrating immigrants into our community to enhance diversity and foster economic growth through inclusivity.	UWSM supported the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Funding for Affordable Housing (Part GG)	Appropriates \$10 million for the Maine State Housing Authority to construct 130 affordable homes.	UWSM supported the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Enhanced Support for Homeless Shelters and Warming Centers (Part HH)	Allocates \$21 million from the General Fund's unappropriated surplus to the Emergency Housing Relief Fund, aimed at programs for individuals experiencing homelessness or immediate housing crises.	UWSM supported the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Creation of Crisis Receiving Centers (Part KKK)	Proposes the development of Crisis Receiving Centers across Maine, offering access to mental health and substance use disorder crisis stabilization services.	UWSM supported the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Disaster Recovery Fund Increase (Part Q)	Proposes amendments to enhance the Disaster Recovery Fund by increasing its maximum funding capacity and removing the CPI factor from its governing statute, with a \$15,000,000 transfer from the General Fund's surplus.	UWSM supported the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.

● Initiative included in final budget

● Initiative excluded from final budget

## INITIATIVES FROM THE PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET OPPOSED BY UWSM

Initiative	Summary	UWSM Action	Final Status
Modification of SNAP Benefits Eligibility Criteria (Part QQ)	Suggests repealing the hardship exception for SNAP benefits, affecting immigrants transitioning into the workforce.	UWSM opposed the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was excluded from the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Postponement of Child Care Subsidy Eligibility Expansion (Part SS)	Seeks to delay the expansion of income eligibility for child care subsidies, affecting affordability and access for families.	UWSM opposed the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Alteration to Maine Child Care Affordability Program (Part TT)	Introduces a delay in benefits for child care staff and redefines the program as a 2-year pilot.	UWSM opposed the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was included in the budget that was passed and signed into law.
Funding Discontinuation for Child Care Wage Supplement	Addresses the cessation of \$4.4 million in funding for monthly child care wage stipends.	UWSM opposed the passage of this initiative.	● This initiative was excluded from the budget that was passed and signed into law.

● Initiative excluded from final budget ● Initiative included in final budget