



**Senator Mike Tipping**

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The Honorable Craig Hickman  
Government Oversight Committee  
c/o Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability  
82 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Hickman, Chair Fay and Fellow Committee Members,

I've heard increased concern recently from constituents and from advocates providing assistance to low-income Maine residents about difficulty contacting the Department of Health and Human Services in order to receive help with a range of public programs.

Some Mainers report waiting on hold for hours. According to media reports, others have received an automated message that the office is simply "unable to accept additional calls."<sup>1</sup>

It's clear that there is currently an increased number of calls to the Department due to the sunseting of federal pandemic-related programs, but this has been an area of concern for much longer. Last year, I spoke with a constituent with stage 4 cancer whose family had been inappropriately denied coverage through MaineCare. She reported having to call at specific times of day on certain days of the week and still having to wait hours to get through to someone who could begin to address her issue.

I understand that advocacy and media organizations have had difficulty receiving information from the Department about the scope and cause of these problems and I understand from speaking with Chair Hickman that the Government Oversight Committee may be able to play a role in accessing that kind of information and assessing potential solutions.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the GOC consider reviewing this matter in an attempt to determine the scale of the problem, what has contributed to it and what can be done to solve it and prevent its reoccurrence.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Tipping  
State Senator, District 8

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<sup>1</sup> Maine SNAP recipients missing money, can't get a hold of DHHS, <https://wgme.com/news/local/maine-snap-recipients-missing-money-dhhs-food-stamps-welfare-assistance-hunger>