

DHHS FY 16/17 Budget Initiative: End Cash Assistance for Non-Citizens

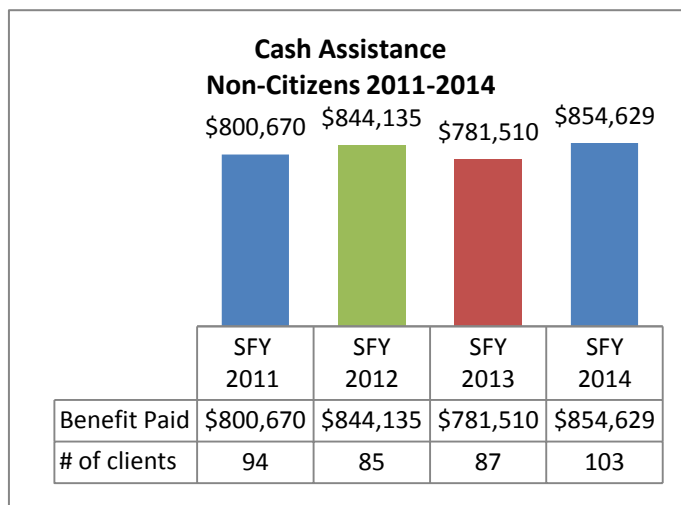
Background

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides cash assistance to elderly, disabled, or blind citizens. Federal law prohibits certain non-citizens from receiving federally-funded SSI benefits.

In 1997, the Maine Legislature enacted a law to spend state taxpayers' dollars to fund supplemental security income to non-citizens, thus bypassing the federal requirement that certain non-citizens such as refugees and asylees who have been in the US for more than 7 years are not eligible for this benefit. The federal law also excludes other non-citizens from receiving federal benefits for the first 5 years.

Maine is one of only 5 states to provide state-funded SSI to non-citizens. Maine and California provide the most generous cash benefits.

To be eligible for the state supplemental cash benefit, you must be either Age 65 and over, or be blind or disabled, by Social Security's definition. Most non-citizens receiving this benefit receive it by virtue of their age and are not disabled or blind.



The current average benefit is \$748 per member, per month. Most of the population also receives MaineCare for emergency services and Food Stamps.

Initiative

This initiative saves state taxpayers' dollars by aligning state policy with federal policy and discontinuing the awarding of SSI cash benefits to non-citizens beyond the level of support the federal government provides.

Savings:

Year	Savings
SFY 16	(\$716,855)
SFY 17	(\$955,806)

Impact

- Currently, 116 non-citizens who are not eligible for SSI cash assistance under federal law are receiving cash assistance from the state. They reside primarily in Androscoggin and Cumberland counties.