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www.mejp.org

Finding solutions to poverty and improving the lives of people with low income in Maine.

June 15, 2014

Invitation to Participate in “*The Solutions to Poverty Project*”

Dear Survey Respondent,

Maine Equal Justice, along with Dr. Sandy Butler at the University of Maine, School of Social Work, is doing a research project to hear directly from people in communities throughout the State who may be having difficulty making ends meet. We are writing to ask for your help. Please consider filling out the enclosed survey to tell us a little about yourself, your opinions and what laws or policies you think would be the most effective in helping to reduce poverty in Maine. We will summarize the information that you and others provide to us in a report that will come out this fall. This report, including the recommendations from this survey, will help us advocate for policies that increase opportunities for all Maine people.

Who is Maine Equal Justice?

Maine Equal Justice is a non-profit legal aid provider, whose mission is to find solutions to poverty and improve the lives of people with low income in Maine. Our work is focused on the issues that affect people’s daily lives – access to affordable health care, food and income security, supports for working families, and higher education and training opportunities. Our work is informed by what we hear from Maine people with low income and others who are committed to increasing opportunity for all Maine people.

What are we asking you to do?

If you decide to help, please complete the enclosed survey. It should take you about 10-15 minutes. After you fill out the survey, please mail it back to us in the enclosed stamped envelope. By returning the completed survey, you are giving us permission to include your responses (**without** your name attached) in our reports on the study findings.

Please return your completed survey to us by July 18, 2014.

Are there any risks to completing this survey?

We believe the risks to completing this survey are minimal, other than your time and effort.

What is the value of completing this survey?

Your confidential responses will be combined with many others. Together they will be used to help public policy makers and others better understand what respondents believe would be the most effective policies to reduce poverty. While there are no direct benefits to you in filling out the survey, we hope that you will feel some pride in taking part in a project that will inform the public discussion about important issues like child care, good jobs and increased access to health care and higher education.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary.

If you do choose to complete the survey, you are free to skip any question you do not want to answer.

Your survey answers will be kept completely confidential.

Your answers will be kept confidential; you do not need to provide your name. But if you are interested in learning about the results of the study or participating in a possible follow-up study, and you do provide your name and address, we will not connect your name to your responses. We will identify your survey by using a code number such as 001. We will also separate your name from the survey and store it separately. Your name; your survey; and a key, linking your name to your survey answers for possible future studies, will all be kept in a secure location at Maine Equal Justice and destroyed in ten years or less. Your survey responses, without your names attached, will be sent to Sandy Butler for analysis. No names will appear in our reports on the study findings.

Your personal responses will not be shared with any state agency or any other individual.

If you would prefer to complete this survey electronically, you will find it at this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SolutionsToPoverty>.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robyn Merrill at Maine Equal Justice (626-7058; *rmerrill@mejp.org*) or Sandy Butler at the University of Maine (581-2382; *sbutler@maine.edu*). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board (581-1498; *gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu*).

Thank you for the time and thought you put into completing this survey.

Sincerely,

Robyn Merrill and Sandy Butler

University of Maine Institutional Review Board Approved for Use Through 5/29/2015

Help Make A Difference For Maine People! Please Respond By July 18, 2014

1. How old are you? _____ years old
2. What Maine County do you live in? _____(e.g. Penobscot)
3. Are you: female male?
4. How many family members, including yourself, live in your household? _____
5. Do you have children under the age of 18 living at home with you? Yes No
6. Are you a single parent? Yes No
7. Have you or anyone in your household ever served in the military? Yes No
8. Please check [✓] any of these benefits that you or anyone in your household received during the last 12 months?

<input type="checkbox"/> Food Supplement benefits (Food Stamps/SNAP)	<input type="checkbox"/> MaineCare (Maine's Medicaid program)	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment Insurance benefits
<input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	<input type="checkbox"/> Subsidized Housing assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> General Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Veteran's benefits
9. Are **you** working at a job for pay now or have you worked in the last 12 months? Yes No
10. Is any other adult **in your household** working at a job for pay now or have they worked in the last 12 months?
 Yes No
11. Please check [✓] any of the following that have happened to you in the last 12 months:

<input type="checkbox"/> You couldn't afford to pay the full amount of your rent or mortgage payment
<input type="checkbox"/> You fell behind on gas, electric or heating bills because you couldn't afford to pay the bills
<input type="checkbox"/> You had to move out of your home because you couldn't afford to pay your mortgage, rent or utility bills
<input type="checkbox"/> You were evicted from your home or apartment for not paying rent or mortgage
<input type="checkbox"/> You were paying at least half of your monthly income for rent or mortgage payments
<input type="checkbox"/> You had to go to a food pantry or soup kitchen because you didn't have enough food
<input type="checkbox"/> Your car broke down and you didn't have enough money to fix it.
12. In the last 12 months, did you have to cut the size of meals for yourself or your family or skip meals yourself because there was not enough money for food? Yes No
13. Do you or does anybody in your household have an illness or disability that limits the ability to work? Yes No

OVER→



Maine Equal Justice

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14. In your opinion how effective would each of the following be in reducing poverty in our State?
Please check [✓] whether you think each is “very effective”, “effective”, “not effective”, or “don’t know”:

	Very Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Don't know
More help with property tax/housing costs for renters and homeowners				
Increase the minimum wage				
Create jobs and increase wages				
Make child care more affordable				
Help people access and keep affordable housing				
Increase the State Earned Income Tax Credit (this is a refundable state tax credit for low-income working families and individuals)				
Give more children a chance to go to Head Start and pre-kindergarten				
Give more adults with low income a chance to go to college and help paying for it				
Expand access to affordable health care for more people with low income				
Support the purchase of healthy foods for people using food supplement (SNAP) benefits				
Increase the number of schools/communities providing school breakfast and summer meals				

15. If the State Legislature could take one action to reduce poverty in Maine, what should it be?
-
-

16. Here are two things that some people say about poverty— check [✓] the one that comes closest to your own opinion:

Most people who live in poverty are poor because their jobs don't pay enough, they lack good health care and education, and things cost too much for them to save and move ahead;

OR

Most people who live in poverty are poor because they make bad decisions or act irresponsibly in their own lives.

17. Do you think that all of the talk about welfare fraud discourages people who truly need help from asking for it?

Yes

No

Doesn't make a difference

Don't know

18. Please check [✓] your approximate yearly household income before taxes. (Include total income of all adults living in your household.)

Less than \$10,000

\$20,000 - \$24,999

\$35,000 - \$39,999

\$10,000 - \$14,999

\$25,000 - \$29,999

\$40,000 or more

\$15,000 - \$19,999

\$30,000 - \$34,999

19. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about what causes poverty or how to reduce it?
-
-

You're almost done! Please go to the next page to finish the survey...

Survey ID #: _____(For office use only)

Help Make A Difference For Maine People! Please Respond By July 18, 2014

Thank you!

If you want to receive the results of this survey please give us your name and contact information below.

You do not have to give us this information if you do not want to. All of the information that you choose to give us will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone else.

- Yes, I would like to receive the results of this survey.
- Yes, I would be willing to share more of my thoughts on these issues.
- Yes, I would like to receive updates and alerts about programs or proposals that help people with low income.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

MAIL SURVEY TO: MEJP, 126 Sewall St., Augusta, ME 04330



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