

# MAINE BEHIND THE NUMBERS

The facts on the economic track record of Maine governors Paul LePage and Janet Mills



## POVERTY

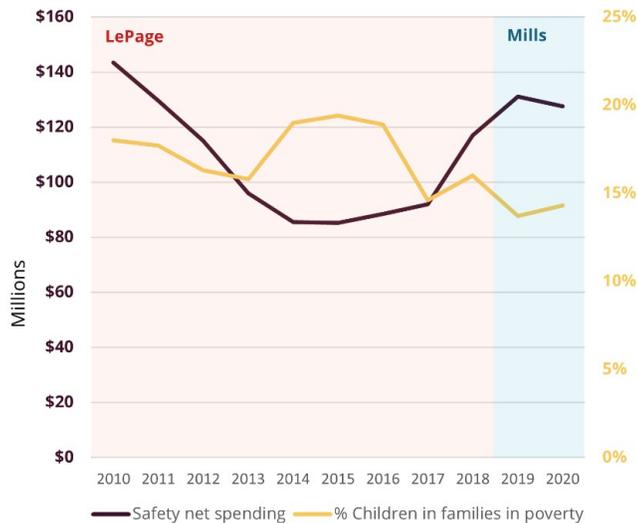
### LePage

- Slashed food assistance and safety net access in the middle of a recession
- Policy changes resulted in 58,000 Mainers losing food assistance
- Children fell into deep poverty at 8 times the national average
- Maine was 9th hungriest state in the nation and the hungriest in New England
- Rejected, hoarded, and misspent millions intended to help people in poverty

### Mills

- Restored and expanded access to social safety net programs
- Committed to ending hunger by 2030 with sweeping plan
- Continued free school meal program for all Maine children even after federal program ended
- Targeted critical funding to child care and supports for working families
- Boosted pay for low-wage workers

**The percentage of children in poverty grew as LePage slashed safety net spending**



Learn more: [bit.ly/povertyMBTN](https://bit.ly/povertyMBTN)

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance, Maine State TANF Expenditure data, US Census Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement.

**MaineBehindTheNumbers.org — a project of MECEP Action**

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Paul LePage photo by Gage Skidmore



## Worsening hunger

Maine's abnormally high hunger rate didn't start with Paul LePage, but his policies made the problem more severe and entrenched. Since at least 2005, Maine has had the highest rate of [food insecurity](#) in New England, a region noted for its low food insecurity. Despite this emergency, LePage targeted food assistance programs for cost-cutting, instituting a raft of [new qualification requirements](#) that resulted in [42,600](#) Maine children losing food assistance through the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). He also vetoed funding for [Meals on Wheels](#), which delivers hot meals to older Mainers in need. By revoking SNAP eligibility, Maine lost out on [\\$142 million](#) in federal food assistance funds. While food insecurity rates were recovering nationally following the Great Recession, the problem in Maine grew even worse. [Between 2013 and 2015](#), one in six Maine households was considered food insecure and Maine was ranked the third hungriest state in the nation.



## Deepening poverty

While [one in four](#) Maine kids went hungry, the LePage administration [cut supports](#) to families in poverty from multiple directions. For a state where infant care is [more expensive than college](#), LePage [failed to secure \\$3 million](#) in available federal funding for child care assistance. And instead of increasing access to health care by expanding Medicaid, LePage restricted it even further, resulting in [16,500 fewer kids](#) accessing MaineCare. While simultaneously obstructing [minimum wage](#) increases, he instituted new lifetime limits for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — critical federal funds targeted to families with the greatest need. More than 8,700 Maine families and [16,000 Mainers lost assistance](#) as a result. Maine children fell into deep poverty at [eight times the national average](#). The strategy of restricting TANF didn't save Maine taxpayers any money because the federal TANF funding came anyway, but instead of distributing the funds to families in need, the LePage administration [misspent](#) and hoarded more than [\\$155 million](#) — enough to run the program for [two years](#). Far from serving as a model economic strategy, LePage's approach extended the pain of the Great Recession and contributed to a sluggish recovery [among the worst in the nation](#).



## Increasing economic security

While poverty and hunger are still serious problems in Maine, efforts by Mills and the legislature are beginning to bear fruit. In addition to expanding Medicaid, Mills restored [TANF](#) and [SNAP](#) aid that LePage denied and signed [new legislation](#) to expand support for families in poverty and remove "benefit cliffs" - large drops in assistance triggered by small pay increases. These changes make it easier for people to succeed in transitioning off of public assistance and into jobs. Mills and the legislature also committed to [ending hunger in Maine by 2030](#). As part of that effort, and spurred by additional needs exacerbated by the pandemic, [school meals are now free](#) for all Maine children, child care workers received [wage supplements](#), the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) was increased fivefold, and [federal nutrition funding](#) is reaching more Maine people.

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