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Tuesday, February 21, 2023

## Testimony of Spectrum Generations, Central Maine Area Agency on Aging

In Support of **Aging and Disability Resource Centers** and **Home Delivered Meals** a part of **LD 258 (HP 163)** - An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025

Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Gerard Queally, President and CEO of Spectrum Generations, Area Agency on Aging and Disability Resource Center serving six counties in Central/Midcoast Maine, Brunswick and Harpswell. I am writing to express my support for the Governor's Budget requesting a state General Fund of \$2,286,048 in FY 24 and \$3,189,351 in FY 25 and beyond, for home delivered meals, as well as \$500,000 each year for Aging and Disability Resource Center activity. This would be a significant investment in promoting and advancing the well-being and independence of older and disabled adults, with the support of their care partners, to live in their community of choice.

Spectrum Generations is committed to actively engaging the people of Maine, across the entire generational spectrum, in a continuous dialogue to assist older and disabled adults to live healthy, socially enjoyable and independent lives. Our programs and services are innovative and entrepreneurial, positioning us as the primary source for solutions to the challenges aging and disabilities present that touch all families - our neighbors and our communities.

We are most pleased that Governor Mills budget is well-aligned with our organizations core purpose and mission through this foundational budget recommendation. This funding is critical to ensure that our states' older adult population and individuals with disabilities have access to nutritious meals and necessary resources to achieve health, well-being and independence. Home delivered meals prevent malnutrition, reduce hospitalizations, improve the overall health of vulnerable populations and fight the issue of food insecurity head-on. Aging and Disability Resource Center activities provide essential supports and resources so that individuals can make informed decisions about their care and gain access the services they need. Spectrum Generations supported 10,418 people in FY 22 through programs and services that make an immediate needed impact and have long-term positive effects.

Through Spectrum Generation's home delivered meals - Meals on Wheels (MOW) - 313,577 meals were prepared, packaged and delivered to 2,170 homebound older adults and adults with disabilities during FY 22. These nutritious meals, expertly created by the chefs at our community centers, are delivered by an incredible cadre of generous, committed volunteers. In addition to delivering these greatly needed meals, the volunteer visit also serves as a check-in with each Meals on Wheels recipient. Through our surveys, it has been reported that 70% of the people we serve feel less lonely and isolated by having a volunteer deliver meals and knowing that a volunteer will be coming to see them, makes 80% of people we serve feel safer in their home.

Alarming, however is that 20% of our Meals on Wheels consumers have stated that they rarely or never have human contact aside from the MOW delivery volunteer, this is roughly 1 in 6 older and/or disabled people in your community. In one such case a MOW recipient didn't answer the door for their meal delivery, which was very unusual, and a safety check was performed. Upon entering the home, the individual was found on the floor where they had been for an unknown amount of time. The family and medical professionals were alerted immediately and the individual unfortunately had suffered a heart attack. This person survived the health event and is now okay with thanks to their volunteer MOW driver! There are many stories like this one, here is another example.

**Amy from Waldo County has the following statement to share about MOW as a support for her parents:**

*"This program has been life and health changing for my parents and they absolutely love the meals they receive. My father can barely use his hands and is in extreme pain from the arthritis but continues to care for my mother on a daily basis at their home. It had become very hard for my father to cook meals at home due to his health issues. What a godsend Meals on Wheels is for my parents and we will continue to support this program long into the future so others in the same situation as my parents can receive the amazing benefits from Meals on Wheels."*

In FY 22 5,337 people utilized our access services which include case management, information and assistance, outreach, and public education. Recently a member of our ADRC team supported a consumer from a coastal community in our service area who had never heard of Medicare Savings Plan. After they experienced a divorce, this person had become very low income to the point of selling their personal belongings on Facebook marketplace to make ends meet. The ADRC gave them a list of food pantries, the number for LiHEAP/WaldoCAP and helped them apply for MSP & SNAP. An application was put forward and they were approved for SNAP and QMB in addition to HEAP. They were so relieved and appreciative when they called to share with the ADRC that supported them, they had been approved for all of these benefits. This person can now afford to pay rent, be warm at their home, eat three meals a day, and take necessary medications. This is exactly how ADRC programs are supposed to work. It's a wonderful feeling to be a part of helping people find their safety net, and get the help they need to live independently in the home of their choice.

Given current inflation rates coupled with the ongoing aftershocks of COVID-19, the number of people requiring MOW and other services related to ADRC continues to grow at a heightened rate. At an average cost of \$9.00 per meal for home delivered meals in the state - \$2,286,048 will provide an additional 254,005 meals to those in-need in FY 24 and an additional 354,372 can be served to those in-need in FY 25. I urge you to prioritize this funding and invest in the health and well-being of Maine's most vulnerable populations for the betterment of our state's homebound older adults, people with disabilities and their families. Thank you for considering, we appreciate it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerard Queally". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gerard" being more prominent than the last name "Queally".

Gerard Queally, President and CEO

Spectrum Generations