



**Testimony of Jena Jones on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Health and Human Services**

**In Favor of LD 587 – Resolve, to Automatically
Increase a Residential Care or Nursing Facility
Resident's Personal Needs Allowance Under the
MaineCare Program When the Consumer Price
Index Increases**

Submitted on March 23, 2023

Greetings, Senator Baldacci, Representative Moore, and the members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Jena Jones and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 135 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in favor of LD 587.

The last time a resident's personal needs allowance (PNA) was increased the year was 1985 and a gallon of gas cost \$1.12¹. Since then, inflation has increased on average 2.76% annually and \$1.00 in 1985 is equal to \$2.82 today². Our privilege allows us to lament the rise in costs as we spend more and more on daily necessities like food and ensuring our personal needs are met.

However, for MaineCare members in residential and nursing facilities who receive a PNA, inflation has continued to rise without the necessary adjustments to account for increasing costs. For residents of nursing facilities, a monthly stipend of \$40 dollars is granted and for folks living in private non-medical institutions (PNMIs), the allowance is set at \$70. These personal needs allowances enable residents to pay for things like haircuts, favorite snacks, outings, or for health-related needs such as glasses or over-the-counter medications and vitamins.

I would encourage you to consider the last time you went to the grocery store – how far would \$40 take you today? Would you be able to purchase what you need for that amount, and would it last you a month?

The intentions of LD 587 allow for the PNAs to be linked to a COLA measure which will ensure that the PNAs distributed to residents maintain their purchasing power over time and that residents can purchase the goods and services they need, when they need them.

¹ (AARP, 2024)

² (Dollar Times, 2023)

The basic needs of a MaineCare member's residency in a nursing facility or PNMI are taken care of – room, board, and medical needs are accounted for – and while all of those elements are necessary for quality of life to be ensured, the resident's personal needs allowances help to ensure that quality of life also maintains a sense of vibrancy. The items purchased – magazines or books, clothing, and other personal expenses, add another layer of quality and autonomy to the resident's life by ensuring they have choices and opportunities in how they spend those dollars.

The MCOA supports all efforts that increase dignity, autonomy, and quality of life for older Mainers living in residential and nursing facilities, especially when those efforts are as long overdue as adjusting PNAs for residents to account for inflation. To that end, I urge you to support LD 587 and the good work it aims to accomplish.

Thank you.

Jena Jones