



Written Testimony of Sylvia Harkins, LSW

In Support of LD 1684 - An Act to Invest in the Health and Wellness of Older Maine Residents by Expanding Coordinated Community Programming

Submitted via Testimony Portal on May 1, 2023

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Sylvia Harkins, and I am the Community Outreach Supervisor at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. I have worked with SMAA since 2005. On behalf of older adults in Southern Maine, I am testifying in support of LD1684 today.

- For over 17 years, I have worked directly with older adults and those with disabilities connecting them with resources and benefits in their communities.
- I have witnessed first-hand what an impact the work of my team makes.
- I'd like to share a few scenarios of actual clients I have recently worked with and the barriers they have faced; highlighting how critical it is for many older adults to have a case manager at their side.

Case # 1

George, 68 years of age with TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury)

- *Lost his apartment due to the building being sold.*
- *Lived in his vehicle/tent for summer into the fall.*
- *Insulin dependent, medication required refrigeration, stored in cooler*
- *George had a small dog who lived with him*
- *George contacted SMAA for assistance.*

Barriers: Documentation required for housing applications: include copies of birth certificate, ID, Social Security card and proof of income. George had no access to or knowledge of using the

Internet and was unable to locate most documents due to homelessness. He did not have the ability to reach or communicate with the entities to acquire these documents.

Outcome: Case manager assisted with applications, contacted necessary agencies to collect documents. George moved into a subsidized apartment prior to the first snow fall. Had George not had assistance from case management he would have remained homeless.

Case #2

Evelyn, in her late 80's, had mild cognitive issues.

- *Following a medical event, she spent several weeks in a rehabilitation facility before returning home.*
- *Evelyn had been receiving Social Security and Supplemental Security Income. Upon discharge, she discovered her Supplemental Security Income had been terminated.*
- *Terrified she would not be able to pay her rent and other expenses.*
- *Housing authority referred Evelyn to SMAA*

Barriers: Due to mild cognitive issues Evelyn was not able to comprehend the letter received from Social Security. She was not aware of the rule that SSI is interrupted if a person is in a facility for more than 30 days.

Outcome: Case manager contacted SS with Evelyn notifying them she had returned home. Her SSI was reinstated, and Evelyn was able to pay her bills and remain in her apartment.

These are two examples of hundreds that my teammates and I have witnessed in my tenure with Southern Maine Agency on Aging. There are individuals who could benefit from case management services **today**, but there are not enough resources to support all of the clients who so desperately need more help.

Given the current housing crisis, the rapidly increasing cost of living, the needs of our clients, and the challenges we're experiencing here in Maine, the demand for case management services will only grow in the coming years.

We appreciate your serious consideration of this bill on behalf of the needs of older adults in Maine. Thank you for your continued support for our work!