



February 25, 2024

Senator Margaret Rotundo
Representative Melanie Sachs
Honorable Members of Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony regarding LD 2214: An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government – Medicaid Savings Program in Maine

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Committee:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine and serve as the President & CEO for VOA Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. VOA Northern New England is a faith-based community nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. Our organization provides affordable housing, health services, homeless services, and social support to people across our state. We are one of the leading providers of affordable housing to older persons living with low incomes in Maine.

I write in opposition to those sections of LD 2214 that attempt to repeal expanded eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program in Maine. As an affordable housing provider for older persons, most of VOA's older tenants live on incomes below the federal poverty level and are already eligible for the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) program. However, we serve residents who have incomes between 150% and 185% of the federal poverty levels (making less than \$27,681) that under the new state investments would have received \$7,300 more each year to cover premiums, copayments, and deductibles. To our tenants who scrape by each month with little disposable income to cover household items or basic needs, \$7,300 would have been a godsend.

These tremendous savings were to be achieved after the Legislature voted for a state investment of \$14M this year that would have yielded a match of \$38M from the federal government. To take away these supports unexpectedly seems unreasonable and a bitter departure for those hoping for relief. The proposed roll back has a direct impact of tens of thousands of older citizens across Maine, including some of VOA's tenants (by and large older women and older people with chronic health conditions or disabilities) that could desperately use more financial support to cover basic needs.

VOA's team of social workers and resident service coordinators was poised to work with all our residents to ensure they were receiving the information needed to apply for these benefits. I would ask the legislature to find the resources necessary to effectuate this expansion of eligibility for older persons who continue to provide vitality to our state.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and I hope you will stand by your past votes to reduce the financial insecurity of older persons in our communities. I am grateful for your public service and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard A. Hooks Wayman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard A. Hooks Wayman, President & CEO

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