

Kevin Lewis
Winthrop
LD 2214

March 18, 2024

Dear Senators Rotundo and Baldacci, Representatives Sachs and Meyer, and members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services,

I am writing today as a concerned community member, taxpayer and business leader to ask that you oppose the Governor's proposed cuts to a vital lifeline within the state's budget, the Medicare Savings Program. The proposed cuts within the Supplemental Budget, LD 2214, would reverse the courageous and important action that you took last year to reduce the financial insecurity of older Mainers with lower incomes by increasing eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).

MSP is a benefit that reduces the amount older people with limited means have to pay on their Medicare premiums so they can afford to buy food, heat their homes, and meet other basic needs. MSP eligibility levels haven't kept pace with steep increases in the cost of housing, food, and heating in Maine over the years, and consequently tens of thousands of older people cannot afford their basic needs, with the largest group being older women living alone. The increases in income eligibility for MSP established last session represented a necessary step forward to ensuring economic security for older Mainers. However, the Governor's proposal to cut these increases threatens to undo this important work.

The overall health of older people in Maine is directly tied to our state's economic vitality. The healthier older people are, the more able they are to productively participate in all aspects of life. For instance, thousands of our older neighbors are raising grandchildren. We can all agree that the physical and economic health of these grandparents is critical to raising healthy children. With two in five working parents reliant on grandparents for free childcare, grandparents are also essential to the overall labor force in Maine. Older Mainers are also the backbone of our volunteer workforce. MSP offers just enough extra help to ensure they can meet their basic needs to remain active and healthy.

I urge the legislature to reject the Governor's proposed language to cut the increased eligibility levels as counterproductive, both now and in the long run. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lewis
Resident of Winthrop
CEO of Community Health Options