



Testimony of Betsy Sawyer-Manter, President and CEO of SeniorsPlus, the Agency on Aging for Western Maine.

To Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services 132nd Maine Legislature, First Regular Session

In Favor of LD 709 – An Act to Establish the Respite for ME Program; and

In Favor of LD 815 – An Act to Provide Funding for Respite Care and Supplemental Services Provided by the Family Caregiver Support Program

Submitted March 14, 2025

Honorable Senate Chair Henry Ingwersen and Honorable House Chair Michelle Meyer and all other Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services Committee, I am Betsy Sawyer-Manter, the President CEO and of SeniorsPlus.

I write today in support of both LD 709 and LD 815. I am combining my testimony with both bills in support of caregivers.

Unpaid caregivers supply thousands of hours of uncompensated care in the state of Maine. These unsung heroes are caring for people regardless of their economic, geographic and disability status. Caring can be fulfilling but it is also often physically, mentally, and intellectually exhausting.

LD 709 is a straightforward rebranding to bring the existing care giver programs administered by the agencies on aging under one umbrella, Respite for Me. I have one suggestion which is to add that any rule making includes the area agency input while drafting. We are the people on the ground and with resources tight and tightening more, we need to streamline regulations that do not increase the administrative burden to keep as much resource at the direct service level as possible.

LD 815 is a necessary bill which adds resources to the respite care system. Caregivers need respite and self-care services to provide quality care, reduce burnout and support for their own wellbeing. We often say that you cannot care for others unless you first care for yourself. This is so true in the world of caregiving. We currently have committed all the resources that are available to us in this area of programming. We have been in this situation since the end of the first quarter of our contract. We currently have 5 caregivers on the waiting list for respite resources. This will continue to grow.

Last year the pilot ended on Respite for Me. This pilot exposed to the need for caregiving support and respite services. As a result, Respite for ME clients who qualified for other

programs were provided access and this in turn led us to commit to all the resources very quickly. The need is great and for slightly over \$5000 annually, this service allows people to stay at home cared for by caregivers who are attending to their own needs as well as those of their loved ones.

I would also make the point that these programs need administrative support dollars included to ensure adequate administration and oversight.

I ask you to support the passage of both LD 709 and LD 815. As “resource richer” programs become less available, this modest support for caregivers is more necessary than ever.

Thank you for your consideration.

I am available to provide additional information if it is helpful.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy Sawyer-Manter
President and CEO
SeniorsPlus
8 Falcon Road
Lewiston Maine 04240
Bsawyer-manter@seniorsplus.org
207-513-3701