



To the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

Testimony in Support of:

LD 709, An Act to Establish the Respite for ME program and LD 815, An Act to Provide Funding to Respite Care and Supplemental Services Provided by the Family Caregiver Support Program

March 14th, 2025

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these bills. My name is Jakob Giron, a Policy Advocate at Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC). I am here to testify in support of LD 709, An Act to Establish the Respite for ME program, and LD 815, An Act to Provide Funding to Respite Care and Supplemental Services Provided by the Family Caregiver Support Program.

CAHC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates the right to quality, affordable healthcare for every person in Maine. As designated by Maine's Attorney General, CAHC serves as Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program. We also serve as the state's Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare, and help people apply for and navigate the enrollment process for MaineCare. Our toll-free HelpLine fielded nearly 7,300 calls and emails last year from people across Maine needing help with insurance coverage or with accessing or affording health care services.

Between 2022 and 2024, the Office of Aging and Disability Services and Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging oversaw The Respite for ME pilot program, which proved to be quite impactful, assisting 782 caregivers with over 56,000 hours of care and \$3.4 million in grants.¹ It reduced social isolation and improved caregiver well-being, showing the need for permanent funding. By adopting this model, Maine can ensure caregivers receive the resources they need while helping older adults stay in their homes. With 87% of Mainers 45+ wanting to age in place, these bills help caregivers sustain their support while reducing burnout.²

LD 709 and LD 815, are essential for supporting Maine's 166,000 unpaid family caregivers. Thank you for your attention to this issue and we hope you will join us in supporting the Respite for ME program by voting ought to pass on LD 709 and LD 815.

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/blog/respites-final-evaluation-confirms-positive-impact-pilot-program-family-caregivers-and-older-2025-01-21>

² <https://states.aarp.org/maine/valuing-invaluable-report>

