

Testimony in Support of LD814: An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-Based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults

John Holland

Gorham, Cumberland County
Southern Maine Agency on Aging
March 24, 2025

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is John Holland, and I live in Gorham. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Representative Cloutier and the co-sponsors of LD814 for bringing forward this critical legislation.

I serve as both a Board Member and a Volunteer Medicare SHIP Counselor at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. We provide services to clients across Cumberland and York Counties. I am writing today to offer my strong support for LD 814, also known as the *Older Mainers Act*. As you know, this is designed to provide funding to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to enhance community-based services and programs that support older adults.

In addition to my role on the Board, I have been volunteering as a Certified Medicare SHIP Counselor since 2012. Over the years, I've had the privilege of counseling hundreds of clients. Often, during these Medicare sessions, we are the "first point of contact" for seniors seeking assistance. While providing guidance on Medicare, we also become aware of other critical needs our clients face. From rising medication costs to skyrocketing healthcare, rent, and food expenses, the financial burdens on older adults are growing. This makes our agency's role even more vital, as we connect clients with trained Resource Specialists in our office who can offer information and services that address a broad range of needs.

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging relies on a network of over 400 volunteers to provide programs that not only improve the quality of life for seniors but also save money for both the state and individuals. By helping seniors "age in place" and avoid costly hospital stays and nursing home admissions, our agency delivers immense value to the community through us volunteers. The programs provided by AAAs across the state save money, enhance seniors' independence, and promote healthier, and more fulfilling lives.

The legislation under consideration will allow our agency and others AAAs across Maine to expand these essential programs, reduce waitlists, and recruit additional volunteers. Volunteers are the heart of our work, providing their time and expertise at no cost, which significantly reduces the financial burden on the state.

I recognize that the current financial situation that the State is facing and will require tough decisions, and I understand that funding may be a challenge. However, I urge the committee to consider the tremendous value that volunteerism brings. The thousands of unpaid hours contributed by our volunteers each day are a testament to the power of community-driven solutions. These volunteers play an indispensable role in delivering critical services that help older adults maintain independence, access healthcare, reduce food insecurity, and receive support for caregivers.

Please consider the following points:

- **Volunteer Impact:** The volunteers at AAAs are essential to the success of our programs. They not only expand our capacity to serve but also create significant cost savings as well as cost avoidance. Their contributions allow us to reach more people and offer more services than we could otherwise afford.
- **Cost Leverage:** For every dollar invested in our programs, the work of our volunteers helps leverage additional resources and increase the scope of our services without incurring additional financial costs.
- **Expanding Reach:** With this funding, we could recruit more volunteers, launch new initiatives, and improve the level of service we provide to more older adults, all while limiting the financial burden on the state.
- **Strategic Investment:** In challenging financial times, investing in our volunteer programs through this bill is a smart and strategic approach to making a meaningful impact without raising costs. Supporting the AAAs through this legislation will allow us to tap into a powerful community resource, ensuring that we can continue delivering essential services efficiently.
- **Building Capacity:** Passing this legislation will not only address un-met needs but also enable us to recruit and train additional volunteers, positioning the AAAs to deliver more services in a timely, effective, and cost-efficient manner.

The *Older Mainers Act* is an investment in the health, independence, and resilience of our communities. It ensures that older Mainers have access to the services and support they need to age in place, while helping caregivers provide critical care. This legislation is an investment in the future of Maine's older adults, and its passage will improve lives for generations to come.

I urge you to support LD 814 and help us continue providing these vital services to our older residents.

Thank you for your time, attention, and your unwavering commitment to enhancing the lives of Mainers.

Sincerely yours,

John Holland
 Gorham, Cumberland County
 Southern Maine Agency on Aging

SMAA Programs and Services

- **Resources & Information:** Individualized information, support and referrals
- **Family Caregiver Program:** Education and guidance for caregivers
- **Money Minders:** Volunteers help with bill paying skills and more
- **Community Cafes:** Providing socialization and nutrition meals
- **Senior Volunteer Services:** Matching folks with SMAA volunteer opportunities
- **Meals on Wheels:** Providing home-bound adults with nutritious meals
- **Medicare:** Health Insurance Counseling, Education, and Problem Resolution
- **Respite for ME Grants** (from the State of Maine): To help you take care of a loved one at home – and to also help take care of you
- **Veterans Helping Veterans (partner agency):** Matching Vets with Vets for companionship and support
- **A Matter of Balance and Tai Chi:** Managing falls and increasing activity
- **“As You Like It”:** Dining out vouchers for select restaurants and cafeterias
- **Senior Games (partner agency):** Adult athletes 45+ can compete nationally and locally
- **Supplemental Food Program:** Connecting seniors with farm fresh food, pantries & more
- **Phone Pals:** Making social connections by matching volunteers with clients who may be home-bound providing conversation and companionship.

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- Strategic Investment:** In challenging financial times, investing in our volunteer programs through this bill is a smart and strategic approach to making a meaningful impact without raising costs. Supporting the AAAs through this legislation will allow us to tap into a powerful community resource, ensuring that we can continue delivering essential services efficiently.

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