

State of Maine - 132nd Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Testimony of Zyanya Shorey on behalf Southern Maine Agency on Aging (Biddeford, Maine)  
March 26, 2025

Supporting: LD814, “An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-Based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults”

Dear Senator Ingwerson, Representative, Meyer and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Zyanya Shorey. I’m a Sabattus resident and the Community Resources Manager at *Southern Maine Agency on Aging*. I’m testifying on behalf of our clients in support of this legislation. We refer to LD814 as The Older Mainers Act, as it truly is for Older Mainers.

My role at *Southern Maine Agency on Aging* is to connect older adults and adults with disabilities of Cumberland and York counties to resources in their area. I have been in this role for over five years and in the past few years I have seen an increase in calls for home repairs. Our clients are unable to afford to pay for home repairs due to the current economic crisis and need to put their money towards food and utility bills, leaving them with little funds to put towards repairs. Also, most of our clients cannot afford access to internet at home or are unable to maneuver online systems on their own and need assistance with applications. As their homes fall into disrepair, they are forced to move out or end up in assisted living facilities.

SMAA strives to empower clients in living independently in their homes, with support from Resource Specialists connecting them with community resources and application assistance. At the beginning of the pandemic, a client called SMAA desperately looking for assistance with replacing all her windows on her mobile home and needed help navigating resources as she didn’t have internet access at home and did not know where to start. I was able to help by investigating available resources that would sell and deliver new windows specific for the mobile home, find a contractor, as well as looking for funding to help pay for this, as the client had been let go from her job due to the pandemic. In the end, the result was successful in helping this client and even found an entity to help pay for the repairs, which was several thousand dollars. If our agency hadn’t intervened, the client would’ve ultimately had to sell her home and go to a long-term care facility since she was also getting home care support in her home. This allowed the client to continue living at home independently and still is to this day.

Increases in the cost of food, fuel, housing and home repair materials have meant that older people don’t have enough money to meet their basic needs. 87% of Mainers over 45 want to age in their homes and communities and it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so.

Agencies on Aging have continuously proven to be essential in helping our older folks to continue living in their home independently. I urge this committee to take action on this bill as our state needs more funding to help continue to support our older population. We are all aging

and depend on our legislation to help catapult the future livelihood of our communities for generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration in addressing this important bill.

Zyanya Shorey