

I am a Volunteer at the Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging, serving the residents of York County. I am writing in strong support of LD814, *An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-Based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults*. I will refer to this as *the Older Mainers Act*, sponsored by Representative Cloutier. The Older Mainers Act is crucial for several reasons:

- **Promotes Independence:** By providing hands-on, wraparound case management services, the Older Mainers Act will help older Mainers stay in their homes longer, delaying the need for institutional care and allowing them to age in place, as more than 80% of older adults wish to do.
- **Eliminates Waitlists for Meals on Wheels:** A 5-year study from Brown University shows that Meals on Wheels reduced hospitalization rates by 31%, emergency room visits by 28%, and nursing home placements by 28%. This is a life and money-saving service, yet currently, over 600 older Mainers are on waiting lists for these services. The Older Mainers Act would allow for more than 335,000 additional meals to be provided across the state.
- **Increases Financial Security:** Through enhanced Medicare education, counseling, and application support, the Older Mainers Act will save Mainers 'money, allowing them to stay in their homes and reinvest in the economy.
- **Supports Caregivers:** Through programming, the Older Mainers Act would provide respite and essential resources to balance work, personal health, and their caregiving duties. Each year, more Mainers become caregivers for their parents, children, and grandchildren. AARP estimates that 61% of family caregivers also hold down a job, so this support is critical to keep them in the workforce.
- **It is a critical investment:** Investing in the Older Mainers Act now will save the state money now and for years to come. The preventative programming the Agencies on Aging provide is proven to delay and keep people out of long-term care facilities, which cost significantly less than nursing home care.
- **Builds Community and Reduces Social Isolation:** Maine's Area Agencies on Aging provide socialization and community building for their members, clients, volunteers, and partners. As the most rural state in the country, such services are essential to the health and well-being of older Mainers.

As a volunteer, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that these services have on our community. I'm not sure how we could have taken care of my mother-in-law without the help we received from the Southern Maine Area on Aging. They helped us find the resources needed to keep her in her home.

Supporting the Older Mainers Act is an investment in the health and resiliency of our communities. It ensures that every older Mainer has access to essential benefits, community, and services, can stay in their home if they choose, and that caregivers receive the support they need.

I urge you to support the Older Mainers Act and help us continue to provide these vital services to our older residents. Doing so will improve the lives of older adults in Maine for generations to come.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to bettering the lives of Mainers.

Sincerely,

Ann C. Milliard