

To: Maine Legislative Committee on Health and Human Services

Date: 03/27/2025

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

Senator Lawrence, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the committee of Health and Human Services.

My name is Star Pelsue, and I am a volunteer with AARP Maine. I am writing today to express my strong support for LD814, an act to provide funding to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) for community-based services and programs to support older Mainers.

It is no secret that people, both in Maine and nationally, are increasingly choosing to age in place—their own homes. However, to maintain that ability, they rely on the services and support provided by organizations like the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). I was not surprised by the statistic shared by the AAA that 52% of Mainers do not have the funds to fully meet their needs. This emphasizes the critical role that AAAs play in providing essential support services, particularly for those with limited financial resources.

Several times a month, I recommend their invaluable services to individuals, especially Meals on Wheels, which is one of my top concerns. Proper nutrition is vital for maintaining health, and it becomes even more important for individuals over 50. The Meals on Wheels program not only supports good nutrition but also helps combat one of the largest challenges facing older Mainers—loneliness. The social interaction that comes with these deliveries is often as valuable as the food itself, offering much-needed companionship for those who might otherwise feel isolated. My in-laws volunteered for Meals on Wheels in Vermont, they stopped doing so at the age of 83 and 85. They spoke highly of the Meals on Wheels program and the social interaction that not only benefited the families that received the meals but they benefited as well.

While I may not yet be old enough to benefit from these services myself, I have seen how these programs can make a significant difference when navigating the often

confusing world of healthcare and social services. For instance, when I was helping my mother through her final years in Florida, I found the Medicare system frustrating and overwhelming. If I had known about the services offered by Area Agencies on Aging in other states, I would have sought them out for assistance. They have been so helpful to my friends here in Maine, leaving them with a sense of support, knowing AAA had their back. More recently, I directed my mother-in-law to the Area Agencies on Aging in Virginia, where her younger sister is battling stage 4 colon cancer. I recommend these agencies to everyone over 65 for the invaluable guidance and support they provide. Programs like AAA have proven track records across the country.

Additionally, I recently learned about the financial services available through the AAA's Money Minders program. With these services, caregivers can receive critical support in managing finances, ensuring older adults are not overwhelmed by bill payments and other financial challenges, which they may be doing for the first time after the death of their loved one. What an excellent resource.

I strongly urge you to consider the importance of funding the Meals on Wheels program, as eliminating waitlists is crucial to ensuring that no one is left without access to these vital services. The Area Agencies on Aging represent the best of our community—neighbors helping neighbors—and the services they provide are a wise investment for the state. By funding programs like those offered by the AAAs, we are not only helping older Mainers age with dignity, but we are also preventing larger, more expensive problems from arising by offering case management that catches issues early.

As a taxpayer, I know that these programs ultimately save the state funds by preventing more costly interventions down the road. A state that is graying and lacks enough beds for care for our population the AAA's is the life raft that allows us to age in our own homes, and in the communities we know. By supporting LD814, we are investing in our neighbors, our communities, and our state's future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge you to support LD814 and ensure that Maine's Area Agencies on Aging have the resources they need to continue serving our older population.

Sincerely,

Star Pelsue

Volunteer, AARP Maine

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