



**LEGAL SERVICES
FOR MAINE ELDERS**

LD 814 – An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults

**Testimony of John Brautigam, Esq. for Legal Services for Maine Elders
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

March 28, 2025

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

My name is John Brautigam, and I am here today on behalf of Legal Services for Maine Elders. LSE provides free legal help for Mainers aged 60 and older when their basic human needs are at stake.

My name is John Brautigam, and I submit this testimony on behalf of Legal Services for Maine Elders. Our organization is dedicated to protecting the rights and dignity of older Mainers by ensuring their access to critical legal services and support systems.

We join with many others in urging your support for LD 814.

Since Maine is home to one of the oldest populations in the nation, the demand for aging services continues to rise, and the funding available to meet these needs remains insufficient. Each of Maine's Area Agencies on Aging works diligently within its coordinated community program area to provide essential, community-based services that enable older adults to remain in their homes, maintain their independence, and experience a high quality of life. However, current funding levels do not allow these agencies to fully meet the growing needs of their communities.

One area in which LSE has had a glimpse into the tangible benefits of expanding AAA services relates to our effort to assist older people facing a housing crisis. LSE and two of the AAA's partnered in a small pilot project to deliver optimized case management services focused on vulnerable older adults facing eviction and/or homelessness. In our experience the older tenants who received these enhanced support services had a far better chance of avoiding eviction or finding alternative housing than those who did not have access to these services.

LEGAL SERVICES FOR MAINE ELDERS, INC.
5 Wabon Street, Augusta, Maine 04333
(207) 621-0087 Fax (207) 621-0742
Offices in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston, Biddeford and Presque Isle
LSE Helpline 1-800-750-5353 (Voice/TTY)
www.mainelse.org

LD 814 would increase state support for the Area Agencies on Aging to be implemented based on priorities identified by local advisory councils and in accordance with the intrastate funding formula. This funding is essential to sustain and expand programs that directly benefit our clients and older adults across Maine, including:

- **In-home services and case management:** Many of our clients wish to remain in their homes as they age. However, they require assistance with daily activities, personal care, and home modifications to do so safely. Expanded funding would allow for increased access to these services, reducing the need for costly institutional care.
- **Meals programs and nutrition support:** Many older Mainers struggle with food insecurity. The Meals on Wheels program and other nutrition services provide a lifeline, ensuring that older adults receive proper nourishment and social interaction.
- **Wellness and preventive care services:** Access to preventative healthcare, chronic disease management, and wellness programs reduces hospitalizations and emergency room visits, ultimately saving state resources in the long run.
- **Respite for family caregivers:** Many older adults rely on family caregivers, who often experience significant emotional and financial strain. Expanding respite care services would provide much-needed relief for caregivers, enabling them to continue supporting their loved ones while maintaining their own well-being.
- **Public education and outreach:** Awareness of available services remains a challenge. Additional funding would allow for greater outreach to ensure that older Mainers and their families can connect with the resources they need.
- **Volunteer services and information/referral programs:** Strengthening volunteer-based services and expanding information and referral networks would enhance the ability of older adults to access assistance when they need it most.

The need for increased funding is not merely a policy recommendation; it is an urgent necessity for Maine's aging population. Without adequate support, many of our state's older residents face unnecessary hardships, from food insecurity and social isolation to financial exploitation and premature institutionalization.

The news from Washington D.C. this week adds urgency. Federal funding for the AAAs comes primarily through the Older Americans Act (OAA), a federal law enacted in 1965. The Administration for Community Living (ACL), which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, administers OAA funds. Reports this week on the abolishment of ACL cast doubt on the continued operation of these programs within the federal DHHS.¹

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you.

¹ https://www.medicarerights.org/medicare-watch/2025/03/27/hhs-announces-sweeping-cuts-that-threaten-access-to-critical-services?utm_source=chatgpt.com