

Testimony of GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law)
In Support of
LD 814, An Act to Promote Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-
based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults

Committee on Health & Human Services
Public Hearing, March 28, 2025

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Distinguished Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Mary Bonauto, and I am a Maine-based attorney who works full time for the nonprofit legal organization known as GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, or GLAD Law. We work in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status, transgender status and gender identity. We are pleased to testify in support of LD 814, An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults.

This Committee is already familiar with the copious data about our population of older Mainers. While older Mainers live in all 16 counties, it is also true that as much as 62.5% of the rural population is aged 65 and older. America's Health Rankings, *Rural Population - 65+ in Maine*, at https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/rural_senior/ME This bill is essential in making it possible for older Mainers across the State, and particularly in rural counties, to attain support they need to access and benefit from the services they need to keep them connected, healthy and safe at home.

This bill would support people across all demographics, with particular attention to people with lower incomes. It would improve community well-being overall, both of the persons needing services as well as those family, friends and caregivers who would otherwise be left to piece things together on their own.

The primary change to the law is to expressly state that Maine will support case management and navigation services in line with the 1987 Older Americans Act. Case managers and resource navigators can help older Mainers understand what services are available to them, and can help complete the outreach, paperwork, and follow-up necessary to secure access to those services.

This support would undoubtedly be invaluable in accessing essential services, including programs related to:

- Ensuring that communities can meet the individual needs of older adults and caregivers and helping older adults remain independent. (Older Americans Act, Title III-B)

- Nutrition, including meals at home and at congregate facilities, and physical activity choices and behaviors in order to maintain or improve health and address nutrition-related conditions. (Older Americans Act, Title III-C)
- Physical fitness, medication management, chronic disease self-management education, psychosocial behavioral health intervention, HIV, arthritis, brain health, diabetes, falls prevention, depression, mental health supports, chronic pain, etc. (Older Americans Act, Title III-D)
- Respite care through various services that offer temporary, substitute supports or living arrangements for care recipients to provide a brief period of relief or rest for caregivers. This can be in home or out of home, and can provide for daytime care for the service recipient (for example, through an adult day care center). (Older Americans Act, Title III-E)
- Supplemental Services, provided on a limited basis to complement the care provided by caregivers (e.g., transportation, home modifications, medical equipment, assistive technologies, and emergency response systems). (Older Americans Act, Title III-E)

In sum, this bill provides a route to an even healthier and happier life for older Mainers. GLAD Law supports LD 814 and encourages the Committee to vote ought to pass. Thank you for your consideration.

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