

State of Maine – 132<sup>nd</sup> Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services Testimony  
of Patricia Pettegrow on behalf of Southern Maine Agency on Aging (Biddeford, Maine)

March 27, 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 Patricia Pettegrow. I am a resident of Buxton and Community Resource Specialist at Southern Maine Agency on Aging. I am testifying on behalf of our clients in support of this legislation. We refer to LD814 as The Older Mainers Act because it truly is for Older Mainers.

While I truly believe that older Mainers have a lot to give to our Community, they are struggling in many areas to maintain their independence in the community. As evidence to this we receive calls each day from people in the community who have a variety of needs. The needs range from needing help with finding housing, concerns about either being homeless or soon to be homeless, nutritional needs, transportation needs, In-home supports, assistance with completing applications for SNAP benefits/Medicare Savings Program/Long Term MaineCare, help paying for utilities, socialization needs, and caregiver needs just to name a few of the reasons for the call. SMAA provides resources and programs which encourage and enrich older Mainer’s lives at the moment that they need assistance. As a Community Resource Specialists we do not always have answers but the people that call us are grateful just to have someone listen to them.

Often friends or family will call SMAA with concerns that their friend/family member is no longer safe living at home alone and are completely overwhelmed with how to proceed at that point. They are looking for assistance. Their goal usually is to have their loved one remain safely at home if possible but because they cannot be at the home 24/7 they are reaching out for help. SMAA offers a list of non-medical in-home care providers, caregiver training/support groups which happen both, in person or on line, and adult day programs. I would urge you to visit one of the adult day programs offered by SMAA. The adults who attend the program, their friends/family and SMAA staff are all amazing people. While working at the Cohen Center in Biddeford there were many times that I wanted to leave my work desk and join in with the numerous activities that were happening in the day program. It is an oasis for all involved and allows the person attending the program to live independently as long as possible. While the Adult Day Program is funded through MaineCare and the VA, the Older Mainer’s Act, LD-814 would provide support to caregivers who are a vital part of the care and safety of older Mainers.

I could go on to talk about other programs such as the Tai Chi class which allows older adults to maintain balance (and confidence) or the Meals on Wheels program which is not only a nutritional program but also a time for the recipient to engage in conversation with the person delivering the meals. If you were to talk to each of the people that receive the meals and those that bring the meals you would discover it offers more than just nutrition.

Thank you for your time and consideration with regards to the Older Mainer’s Act – LD 814. In supporting this bill you are not only providing assistance to older Mainer’s but to their friends and family.

Patricia Pettegrow