

Testimony for Committee on Health and Human Services on LD 814: An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-Based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults

Honorable Chair, members of the Committee, and fellow advocates,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today 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. I am honored to be here as a member of the Board of Spectrum Generations and as a volunteer providing Medicare Counseling services to seniors.

In my experience working with seniors, both as a board member and in my volunteer roles, I have witnessed firsthand the growing needs of older adults in our communities—needs that often go unmet due to financial constraints, lack of transportation, and limited access to essential services. Many seniors over the age of 65 are living alone and face significant health challenges. These health issues, combined with the absence of family support for many, create an isolated and vulnerable population.

Many seniors in our community are subsisting on Social Security benefits, which average approximately \$1,600 per month. For many, this income is insufficient to cover the cost of housing, utilities, medical expenses, and other necessities. They must make difficult decisions between paying for prescription medications, groceries, or utilities. This financial strain leads many to rely on services like Meals on Wheels, which provide not only critical nutritional support but also a vital social connection.

Meals on Wheels, in particular, serves as a lifeline for many older adults, offering prepared meals that seniors who are frail or have mobility issues would otherwise be unable to acquire and prepare themselves. In addition to providing a nutritious meal, the daily delivery provides a much-needed human connection. For some, the Meals on Wheels driver may be the only person they interact with on a given day. This social contact can help combat the loneliness and isolation that many seniors experience, which, as we know, has detrimental effects on both physical and mental health. We also know that providing meals and direct services can delay costly institutional care in nursing homes. That's important in light of the shortage of nursing beds and long term care facilities in our state.

Spectrum Generations plays an integral role in supporting older adults in our region, not only through our direct services but also by offering critical information and referrals. We provide support to caregivers, helping them navigate the often overwhelming responsibilities of caring for a loved one. Our team connects seniors and their families with a wide range of community resources, ensuring that older adults can access services such as home care, transportation assistance, and financial support programs. Additionally, we help seniors access other programs that address their basic needs, such as nutrition, healthcare, and housing.

These services, which are made possible through funding to Area Agencies on Aging like Spectrum Generations, are vital to maintaining the independence and well-being of older adults

in our community. By providing these resources, we help ensure that seniors can continue to live in their homes, surrounded by the support and services they need to thrive.

It is essential that we continue to support and expand community-based programs that serve older adults. Area Agencies on Aging are pivotal in ensuring that these seniors receive the assistance they need to age with dignity and respect. LD 814 provides an important step forward in addressing the increasing demands for such services. With additional funding, we can help ensure that older adults receive the support they need in their homes and communities, preventing premature institutionalization and improving their quality of life.

I strongly urge you to support LD 814, as it will directly benefit our senior population and the community organizations that work tirelessly to support them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Diane Morrison
Member, Board of Spectrum Generations
Volunteer, Medicare Counseling