



LEGAL SERVICES FOR MAINE ELDERS

LD 2108 - An Act to Establish the Suicide Mortality Review Panel

Testimony of Marge Kilkelly for Legal Services for Maine Elders
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Feb. 4, 2026

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

My name is Marge Kilkelly, and I am testifying on behalf of Legal Services for Maine Elders in support of LD 2108 An Act to Establish the Suicide Mortality Review Panel and thank Rep. Stover for bringing it forward.

We support creating a multidisciplinary panel to conduct thoughtful, retrospective reviews of suicide deaths and to recommend practical prevention improvements. A system that learns from tragedy can reduce future harm.

Our key message is simple: this work must not overlook older Mainers. Suicide among older people is often tied to distinct drivers and system touchpoints, including isolation, untreated depression, chronic pain, functional decline, housing instability, caregiver stress, and barriers to accessing care. If the panel's membership and reporting do not explicitly include the older population, the findings and recommendations might tilt toward other groups.

We respectfully suggest two focused changes:

--Add explicit older-adult representation or expertise to the panel's membership. The bill should require at least one member with demonstrated expertise serving older adults, and ideally at least one older adult member. This will ensure that case reviews, system-gap analysis, and recommendations reflect the realities of later life in Maine.

--Require age-specific reporting, including a clear discussion of older adults. The annual report should include findings disaggregated by age and should contain a specific section on older adults, identifying risk factors, service gaps, and prevention strategies tailored to later life. Without that requirement, older-adult suicide can disappear in aggregate statistics even while lives are lost.

With those targeted adjustments, this panel can become a powerful tool for prevention across the lifespan, including for the people Legal Services for Maine Elders serves every day.

Thank you for your time. We would be glad to work with the sponsor and the Committee on amendment language.

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