

Jim Clark
AgeWise Maine
LD 2212

I urge you to include additional funding in the supplemental budget for AgeWise Maine (the Area Agency on Aging services) to help older Mainers age safely at home. The 2025 one-time investment that was approved has been effective in providing services to about 9,000 Mainers , including 500 folks who were on waitlists for Meals on Wheels.

My 91-year-old client, Hank Dumont, who testified in front of the HHS committee last year, was shocked this week when he learned that the current supplemental budget included NOTHING for Older Mainer services. He has been so grateful for the meals and social connection which he receives weekly that, even with his very modest income, he has become a donor to AgeWise Maine himself. There are thousands of people like Hank who cannot afford to do that.....they are the ones we need to help; that group is only going to grow in number dramatically by 2020. THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.

The supplemental budget is an opportunity to fund programs with a strong return on investment and to lead the way in creating a state where we can all age well. An investment now of \$9 million annually will save the state about \$10 million per year alone in long-term care and related hospitalization costs as well as fund programs like Meals on Wheels that are proven to get 1,000 older Mainers get off Meals on Wheels wait lists.

As the oldest state in the nation, the Maine legislature has an opportunity to lead the nation in how we can support and celebrate our state's older citizens.