

To: Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee

From: Emily Christy, Portland

Re: Additional Investment in Older Mainers Needed in the Supplemental Budget

Hello,

My name is Emily Christy and I live in Portland. I am testifying on behalf of the Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging.

I am here to urge you to include additional funding in the supplemental budget for Area Agency on Aging services that help older Mainers age safely and with dignity in their own homes.

This issue is deeply personal to me. When my grandmother fell at age 100, I was stunned by how few practical products, services, and supports were available to help her remain safe and independent. My family had resources, time, and advocacy skills—and even then, navigating aging services was difficult. That experience ultimately led me to pursue a master's degree in gerontology. I often think about how much harder this reality is for older Mainers who do not have those advantages, which is the unfortunate reality for many people in our state.

Maine's Area Agencies on Aging provide cost-effective, evidence-based services that directly address this gap. From nutrition and caregiver supports to care coordination and safety services, AAAs help older adults remain safely at home—where they overwhelmingly want to be. These services reduce hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and premature nursing home placements, generating meaningful long-term savings for the state while improving quality of life.

In addition to being a constituent, I also serve on the Board of the Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging. I have been consistently impressed by the caliber of its leadership and staff. This is not an organization waiting for handouts; it is one that actively seeks innovation, partnerships, and growth to stretch every dollar and expand its impact. Any additional funding included in the supplemental budget would be stewarded thoughtfully and effectively.

Last year's one-time investment is already making a difference—supporting an estimated 9,000 older Mainers, including 500 additional Meals on Wheels recipients. However, the current supplemental budget includes no additional funding for these essential services, despite growing demand driven by Maine's rapidly aging population.

As the oldest state in the nation, Maine has an opportunity to lead in how we support and value older adults. I urge you to include additional ongoing funding for Area Agency on Aging services in the supplemental budget. This is a smart, fiscally responsible investment that allows older Mainers to age safely at home while reducing far more costly interventions down the road.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service on behalf of older Mainers.

Sincerely,
Emily Christy