

TO: Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees

FROM: Anne Dalton; Falmouth Maine

RE: Additional Investment in Older Mainers Needed in Supplemental Budget

DATE: February 18, 2026

Hello, My name is Anne Dalton, I am a resident of Falmouth Maine and currently serve as President of the Board of the Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging (SMAA). SMAA is one of the five Agencies on Aging that comprise AgeWise Maine. Together we provide comprehensive services and supports to over 53,000 older Mainers that assure their safety, health and dignity all while enabling many to remain in their home communities at a considerable savings to them as well as to the taxpayer. We very much appreciate the one-time funding in last year's budget; it helped significantly when we were facing reducing services because of federal cuts.

Unfortunately, the supplemental budget does not contain any new funding for older Mainers and so we again face the likelihood of reducing services. Not only will this impact current clients, the anticipated deeper cuts in federal nutrition and healthcare programs will likely further reduce the number of people we can serve.

What does this look like in terms of the people affected? Today just over 900 people are on the waiting list for Meals on Wheels. These are people who are skipping meals and may eat only once a day. They are juggling paying for food, medications, utilities and rent. Typically they are isolated; living alone and without any consistent contact with others. These factors together make them far more likely to experience medical emergencies, declining cognitive and physical ability, and loneliness that we now know can actually shorten life span. That Meals on Wheels delivery is nutritious food, a reliable and consistent volunteer who stays to visit, and, at times, a lifesaving safety check. Without funding we will only see that waiting list grow.

There's also a savings side to investing now to support older Mainers with programs such as Meals on Wheels. Healthier older adults experience fewer medical challenges requiring hospitalization or emergency care and are less likely to be forced to leave their home and enter a nursing home. Meals on Wheels costs roughly \$10/day while MaineCare pays roughly \$254/day for nursing home care. If we can prevent 103 older Mainers from requiring nursing home care they do not want, the state will save over \$10 million.

All of this makes it imperative that there is increased funding for the services provided by the "triple AAAs" across Maine. We are the oldest state in the nation and the percentage of our older population is growing. It only makes sense that we invest in preventative programs that have proven their effectiveness over and over again. We urge you to include additional ongoing funding in the supplemental budget for older Mainers.

Thank you for your continued service to all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne Dalton".

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