

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

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

Hello,

My name is Melissa Paquet, and I live in Biddeford. I am testifying today on behalf of the Southern Maine Agency on Aging, where I work as a Resource Specialist supporting older adults and their caregivers.

I am here to urge you to include additional funding for Area Agency on Aging services that help older Mainers age safely at home in the supplemental budget.

In my work as a Resource Specialist, one of the greatest needs I see among the older adults I support is the absence of a true support system. Many have no family nearby—or no family at all—and they are left to manage every aspect of aging completely alone. They must navigate complex health-care decisions, manage their bills, stretch limited income, and try to remain in safe, accessible, and affordable housing without anyone to rely on for help.

I am currently working with a couple who urgently need to move out of their apartment and into subsidized housing. They have lived in their current home for more than 30 years, on the third floor of a building with no elevator. As they age, navigating multiple flights of stairs has become unsafe and physically impossible—they need a more accessible living situation to remain independent and avoid injury.

Their landlord is renovating the building, and the resulting rent increase will be far beyond what they can afford. They have no family locally, no support network to help them through this transition, and no financial means to hire a moving company. Even though moving is essential for their safety, stability, and financial survival, they are being forced to navigate this major life upheaval entirely on their own. Without assistance, they face the very real risk of homelessness.

Our Agency has assisted them with applying for the Property Tax Fairness Credit, HEAP, securing a wheelchair, completing a benefits checklist, contacting moving companies, and reaching out to organizations that may be able to help—but the need is far greater than what current funding allows us to meet.

Closing:

I strongly urge you to include additional, ongoing funding for these essential services in the

supplemental budget. This investment is not only cost-effective—it is necessary to ensure that older Mainers can age safely, with dignity, and in the communities, they call home.

Thank you for your time, attention, and service on behalf of older Mainers.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Paquet