

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

From: John Holland

Subj: Testimony in Support of the Supplemental Budget

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees,

I am writing to express my strong and unequivocal support for the inclusion of additional funding for Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) in the supplemental budget. The supplemental budget does not include any additional funding for these services.

This funding is not simply helpful ...it is essential. The AAAs are the backbone of Maine's aging services network, ensuring that older adults across our state can live safely, independently, and with dignity in their own homes and communities.

Without this additional support, service reductions will be unavoidable and immediate. Several agencies are already managing waitlists for critical programs such as Meals on Wheels. At present, over 900 older Mainers are waiting for meals and that number projected to grow to over 2,700 later this year without further investment. Behind each of those numbers is a person: a neighbor, a veteran, a parent, a lifelong contributor to our communities.

By approving this funding, you will sustain and strengthen programs that address fundamental human needs:

- **Meals on Wheels – More than a meal delivery service, Meals on Wheels provides essential nutrition, safety checks, and meaningful human connections. Drivers often serve as the only regular point of contact for homebound seniors, observing changes in health or living conditions and reporting concerns that can prevent crises.**
- **Adult Day Services – These programs offer structured, compassionate support for individuals living with dementia and related conditions, while providing critically important respite for family caregivers who potentially face emotional and financial exhaustion.**

- **Phone Pals – A simple but powerful program that combats isolation and loneliness through regular check-in calls, strengthening mental health and social connections for older adults living alone.**
- **Medicare Counseling – Free, unbiased counseling that empowers older Mainers to make informed healthcare decisions and has already saved significant out-of-pocket costs, easing financial strain on fixed incomes.**
- **Volunteer Training and Coordination – With approximately 1,500 volunteers statewide contributing services valued at an estimated \$3.5 million last year, additional funding ensures continued recruitment, training, and coordination of this remarkable workforce. The return on investment is extraordinary.**

The one-time \$3.0 million allocation that was awarded addressed urgent gaps, but it did not resolve the structural funding shortfall facing our aging network. As Maine remains the oldest state in the nation, demand for services will continue to grow. Failing to provide this additional funding will not reduce need rather, it will simply shift costs to hospitals, emergency rooms, nursing facilities, and family caregivers who are already stretched thin.

This is a fiscally responsible investment. It delivers measurable returns, reduces higher downstream costs, and most importantly, preserves the dignity, health, and independence of older Mainers.

I respectfully urge you to approve this additional funding in the Supplemental Budget. The need is real, the impact is proven, and the time to act is now.

Respectfully submitted,

**John Holland
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LD 2212

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