

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

From:  
John Newby  
Harpowell, Maine

Re: Additional Investment in Older Mainers Needed in Supplemental Budget

Hello,

My name is John Newby, and I live in Harpswell, Maine. I am writing as a full-time caregiver and as a Mainer deeply impacted by the services provided through our Area Agencies on Aging.

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. More specifically, my family has received services through Spectrum Generations.

Maine's AAAs provide cost-effective services that help older adults remain safely at home. These services are a proven investment that reduce hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and nursing home placements—ultimately saving the state significant long-term care costs.

The budget before you is an opportunity to invest in 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 will save millions on long-term care costs and fund programs have been proven to help older Mainers age where they want to—at home and in their communities. I am one of the Mainers along with my beloved spouse.

For the past seven years, I have been the full-time caregiver for my wife, Venus, who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease at just 53 years old. We have been married for 35 years, and this disease has devastated our lives and our family.

From the beginning, we pursued every possible treatment, including participation in clinical trials in Boston. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, isolation and uncertainty made an already overwhelming journey even harder. I made the decision to care for Venus at home rather than place her in a nursing facility. While this allows me to remain by her side, it has come at an enormous emotional and financial cost. Some days, she no longer recognizes me.

Because Venus was diagnosed at such a young age and had a limited work history, she did not qualify for disability benefits or MaineCare. I was forced to leave my permanent job and

now rely on remote work in order to also care for her. Our savings have dwindled, and we struggle to make ends meet—often relying on community-based resources to get by.

Programs supported through Maine’s Area Agencies on Aging help families like mine remain stable and keep loved ones at home, where they want to be. These services not only preserve dignity and quality of life, but they also prevent far more costly institutional care.

Our story is not unique. Across Maine, families caring for loved ones with Alzheimer’s and other age-related conditions are overwhelmed and under-supported. This disease does not only affect the person diagnosed—it takes a profound toll on caregivers emotionally, physically, and financially.

The current supplemental budget includes no additional funding for these essential services. Thank you for last year’s one-time investment. That funding is already hard at work providing services to a projected 9,000 older Mainers, including 500 additional Meals on Wheels recipients. Continued and ongoing support is essential to sustain and expand this impact.

As the oldest state in the nation, Maine has an opportunity to lead the country in how we support and value older adults and their caregivers. I respectfully urge you to include additional ongoing funding in the supplemental budget and make this smart, cost-effective investment in Maine’s future.

No caregiver should have to face this fight alone.

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

Sincerely,

John Newby