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**Testimony of Maine Association of Agencies on Aging and Aroostook Agency on Aging  
in Support of Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Home Delivered Meals**

a part of LD 258 (HP 163) An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025

Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Joy Barresi Saucier, of Mars Hill, Maine, offering testimony in support of LD 258 in my role as Executive Director of the Aroostook Agency on Aging and President of the Maine Association of Agencies on Aging.

As we age, we want to make our own decisions and live independently. We know that when we age in our home community, we contribute our knowledge and talent to make our community stronger. There are five Agencies on Aging in Maine; all focused on helping older adults continue to live independently in their home communities.

Nearly 29% of Maine's total population is age 60 and over. We know that 1 of every 4 older adults live alone in Maine and that 1 of every 6 are threatened by hunger.

All Agencies on Aging offer five categories of core service, two of which are impacted by LD 258: Supportive Services including Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Nutrition Services including Home Delivered Meals.

**Aging and Disability Resource Centers**

All people have questions or need assistance from time to time. Agencies on Aging in Maine act as Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) providing confidential, unbiased telephone and in-person information and support to older people, those with disabilities and their family caregivers. These agencies often act as the first and only responder to those with questions or challenges that impact their ability to live independently.

In FY2022, Maine's Agencies on Aging provided responses to over 291,000 requests for Information and Assistance. Not only is the current community need immense, but requests from consumers are increasingly complex due to limited community assets and growing challenges in areas such as lack of available, safe housing; high fuel costs; and caring for those with dementia.

LD 258 provides funding through the Office of Aging and Disability Services to strengthen ADRCs at Agencies on Aging enhancing no wrong door system programs. This funding will ensure that all older adults and their caregivers in Maine have access to someone who can help them navigate their situation and access resources to help them stay living in their home community.

### **Home Delivered Meals**

All Agencies on Aging address nutritional needs through a variety of programs, including Home-Delivered Meals, Congregate Dining, and Nutrition Counseling and Education. Home Delivered Meals, more commonly known as Meals on Wheels, provides daily fresh meals or weekly frozen meals to older adults who are homebound and have difficulty with meal preparation. All participants receive an assessment of their nutritional status and referrals are made as appropriate to other programs and services to help ensure good nutrition and independence. Meals are delivered regularly to participants by volunteers who not only take the time to conduct safety checks, but also to provide a caring connection to the community.

A Brown University study in 2015 found that older adults living alone who received meals had significant reductions in feelings of isolation and loneliness, were less worried about staying in their homes, felt safer, and experienced fewer falls and hospitalizations. There have been many examples throughout the state of situations where Home Delivered Meals staff and volunteers have saved the lives of those served.

Through the pandemic, all regions of Maine saw significant growth in demand for Home-Delivered Meals. In the fiscal year prior to COVID, statewide over 5,200 older adults were provided with over 661,000 meals. During COVID, that number basically doubled to over 10,000 older adults receiving 1,156,033 meals annually with approximately 2/3 of new consumers qualifying by pre-pandemic eligibility standards. In the last fiscal year, Agencies on Aging continued to see strong need for the program with 1,022,352 meals provided; a 45% increase over pre-pandemic levels.

Contributions from the community make the program highly cost efficient. Last year, 700 volunteers throughout Maine contributed 63,886 hours of service to the program. Valued at \$1.7 million, this volunteer time exceeded the total amount contributed to the program through either state funding (\$564,043) or regular Older Americans Act Title III funding (\$1.43M). In addition, the Agencies on Aging receive over \$1.5 million annually to support this vital program from corporate, individual, foundation, and municipal donations.

Total expenditures state-wide for Home Delivered Meals in 2021-2022 exceeded \$8.6 million, with a portion of those costs covered through ARPA funding, which is expected to be depleted by the fall of 2023.

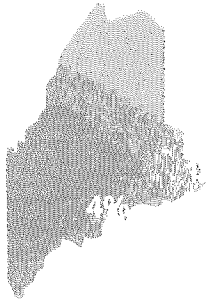
This leaves many older adults in the State at risk for losing this life sustaining program. LD 258 is one step we can take to prevent this from happening as it provides an additional \$2.29M in state funding annually to ensure home-delivered meals continue to be available for homebound older adults.

We appreciate your support as we all work together to continue to meet the needs of older adults living independently in the great State of Maine.

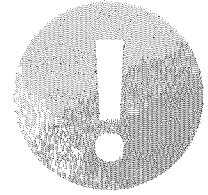
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# Meals On Wheels

## A Vital, Life-Saving Program for Older Adults in Maine



Meals-On-Wheels is a successful public-private partnership. To ensure its success and the health of older Mainers, the State of Maine **MUST** increase its funding so that the Area Agencies on Aging can continue to meet the demand for this critical program, and take care of thousands of older Mainers.



### Meals Served

2018-2019: 661,286  
2019-2020: 985,473  
2020-2021: 1,231,640  
2021-2022: 1,022,352

### 2022 Numbers

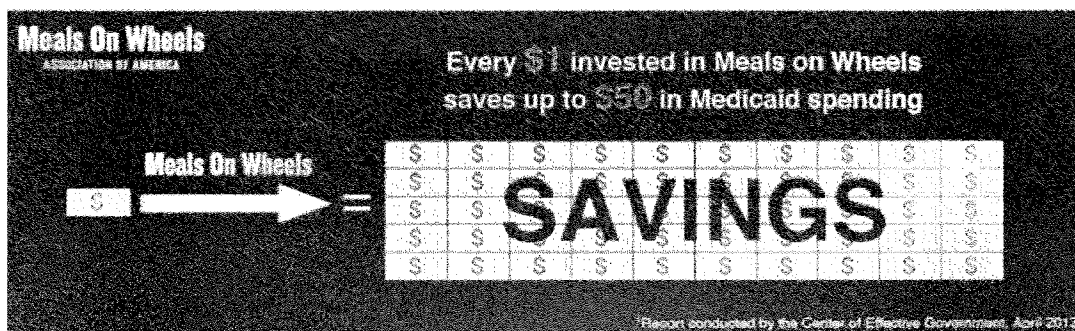
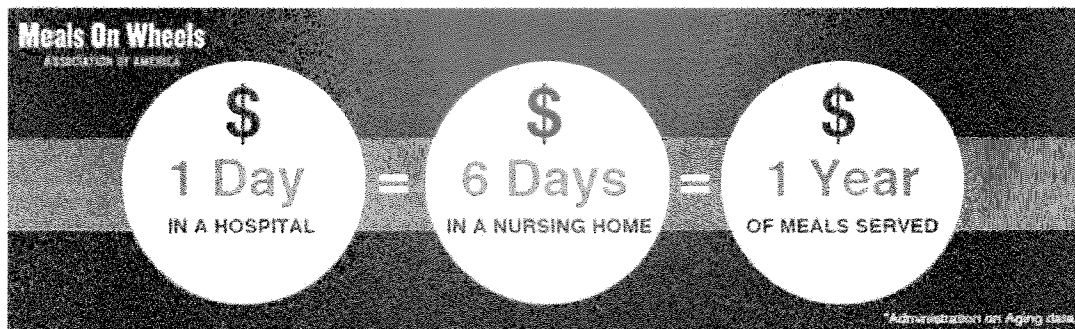


700 Volunteers

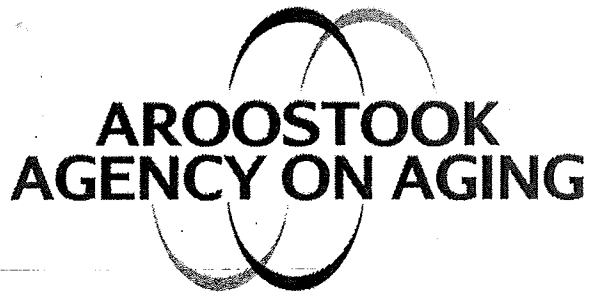
63,886 Hours

Equivalent to \$1,710,228 in donated time.

The COVID-19 pandemic doubled the demand for Meals on Wheels, and the demand is not going away.



On behalf of the Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging



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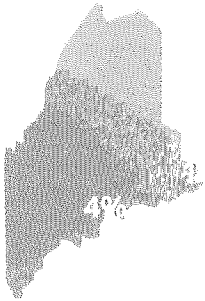
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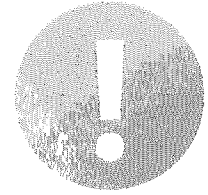
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# Meals On Wheels

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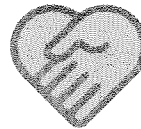
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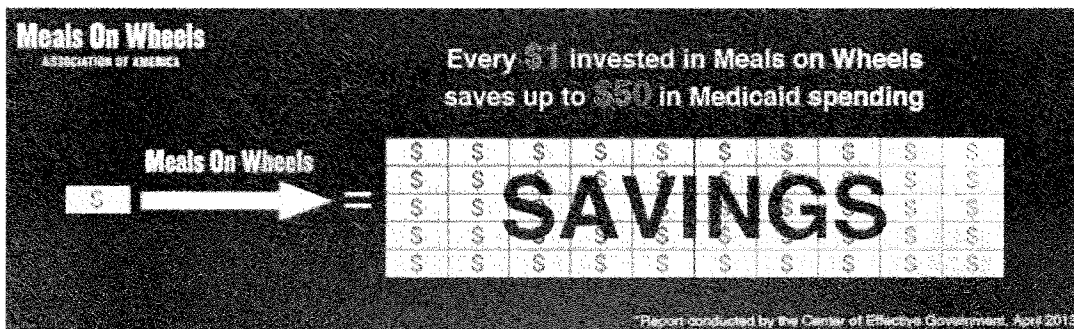
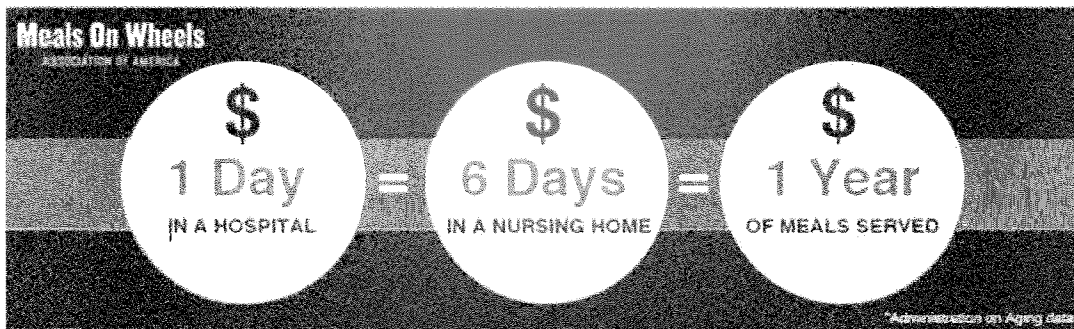


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