



8 Falcon Road • Lewiston, Maine 04240

1-800-427-1241 • 207-795-4010

Fax: 207-795-4009 • www.seniorsplus.org

Testimony on LD 258 – Biennial Budget

Good Day Senators Rotundo and Baldacci, Representative Sachs and Meyer and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the Health and Human Services Committees. I am here today in support of LD 258, the Biennial Budget.

My name is Betsy Sawyer-Manter. I am the CEO of SeniorsPlus, the Area Agency on Aging in Western Maine. Among many other services and supports to older people and people with disabilities, we are likely best known for the provision of home delivered meals, also known as Meals on Wheels.

Today, you will receive testimony from my colleagues across the state on the need for increased support for Meals on Wheels. I too, echo the need that has had a bright light shined on it during the pandemic. The uptick in participants clearly demonstrates that many more people are in need than we previously knew.

We expect that the upcoming reduction in SNAP benefits will likely only add to the need. Meals on Wheels America recently published a statement that included the following data, "At the end of February, an individual over 60 will lose an average of \$138 per month in SNAP benefits". This makes the case for other nutritional options even more necessary.

In my testimony, I want to stress the economic case for increasing funding for Meals on Wheels. The state's return on investment is clear. Meals on Wheels saves money and increases the quality of life for participants while extending the ability to remain at home for as long as possible.

"A study at Brown University, as reported in the Health Services Research Journal, found that for every additional \$25 a state spends on home-delivered meals per person, it can expect a 1% decrease in the low care nursing home population. That translates to millions of dollars in Medicaid savings annually. Another Brown University study published in 2015 found that high-risk seniors receiving Meals on Wheels showed greater improvements in both mental and physical health, fewer hospitalizations and were less likely to fall."

"The average cost of a one-month nursing home stay is equivalent to providing home-delivered meals five days a week for approximately seven years," one of the studies in the analysis found. That is a pretty good return on investment.

I want to end by thanking you and giving a big thank you to some members of this legislature who have been or continue to be Meals on Wheels drivers. Thanks especially to Representative Jessica Fay and to Senator Marianne Moore for their service!

And I would also point out that there are many, many good investments inside LD 258.

This budget also contains critically needed funding for basic safety net supports and services for older adults, like funding for the Area Agencies on Aging, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Legal Services for the Elderly, the Independent Housing with Supports Program, the Elder Services Connection Program, Adult Day Services, and Adult Protective Services, just to name a few. We support all these initiatives and ask you to include them in the Biennial Budget.

We appreciate all that you do to make our state one that takes care of our vulnerable citizens.

Thank you.

Betsy Sawyer-Manter
CEO

SeniorsPlus

207-513-3701

207-671-5621

Bsawyer-manter@seniorsplus.org