



One Weston Court, Suite 109, Augusta, ME 04330

1.800.639.1553 | Fax 207.622.7857



**Written Testimony of Lindsay MacDonald, Vice President of Community Engagement, Spectrum Generations (the Central Maine Area Agency on Aging).**

**To Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services 131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature. In Support of LD 1522 – “An Act to Provide Economic Justice to Historically Disadvantaged Older Citizens by Amending the Laws Governing the Medicare Savings Program.”**

**Delivered in person on April 20, 2023 (By Lindsay MacDonald, V.P. Community Engagement, Spectrum Generations).**

Thank you, Senate Chair Joe Baldacci and House Chair Michelle Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee for this opportunity to bring support to LD 1522. My name is Lindsay MacDonald, V. P. of Community Engagement for Spectrum Generations – presenting testimony on behalf of Spectrum Generations – we are Central Maine’s Area Agency on Aging spanning six counties and serving over 10,000 people annually.

The United States Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Office of Health Policy released a report last year that noted 5.3 million Medicare beneficiaries have difficulty affording their medications. They went on to cite the solution – expand Medicare drug benefits - exactly as this bill aims to do.

Not only is this an issue of economic equity, but this is also about investing in health management to reduce costs and burdens on the healthcare system – improving the financial outlook for Maine’s people, their access to healthcare and eventually, improved state economics. As we work with our consumers, here is what we know firsthand: A consumer will need medication as they are managing chronic - at times multiple chronic- conditions. People who struggle to afford their medications may go without these needed medications or sacrifice other Economic Drivers of Health (EDoH), like nutritious food, to afford their prescriptions. When this happens the people in our state, or any of these 5.3 million aforementioned people end up shifting the burden of managing their chronic conditions to more expensive means.

For example, people living with a diabetes diagnosis may have significant or higher rates of affordability challenges in obtaining and managing their prescriptions than other groups. When these individuals can’t get medications or nutritious food due to affordability, people will experience increased emergency care visits with acute crisis vs. the benefits of ongoing managed care services.

Adoption of policy, like outlined in this bill, has begun in other states. Maine will not be the first, but we can join states leading the way for the betterment of Maine’s people. If we don’t act now, we will fall behind. Let’s address this serious problem and improve the health and well-being of Mainers. LD 1522 provides a meaningful, future-conscientious solution to a serious problem. I urge you to support this important bill.

Lindsay MacDonald