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## **TESTIMONY**

### **In Support of**

### **LD 1684; An Act to Invest in the Health and Wellness of Older Maine Residents**

### **by Expanding Coordinated Community Planning**

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

May 1, 2023

### **Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

The Ombudsman Program staff are pleased to provide testimony in support of this legislation.

The Ombudsman Program is a nonprofit agency that provides statewide advocacy for older and disabled residents of nursing homes, residential care, assisted living and for recipients of home care services. Additionally, the program serves patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing the long-term services and supports they need when they are ready for discharge. Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging are a critically important resource for older adults who need information and assistance in accessing the programs and services they need to support their wellbeing and independence in their communities. Each Area Agency helps with home delivered meals, caregiver support, information regarding insurance and drug benefits, as well as assisting with access to community resources.

While the Older American's Act provides the Area Agencies with limited funding to provide case management services to assist older adults with complex issues, more funding is needed allow expansion of this important service. This legislation will provide the necessary funding for each Area Agency on Aging to develop the infrastructure, staffing, training and outreach to provide case management services. It also provides funding for ongoing case management.

Older adults across the state face challenges in finding affordable housing. Transportation is another concern, particularly in rural areas. The direct care workforce shortage makes home care difficult to access. Case management services can make a significant difference for older

adults by assisting them in addressing complex issues that impact their wellbeing and independence.

We urge your support for this important initiative. Thank you for your consideration.