



Testimony before the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Health and Human Services on LD 2214

February 24, 2024

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci and Representative Myer; Members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Health and Human Services

Ladies and Gentlemen::

For the past 25 years, the Island Commons <https://www.islandcommons.com/> has served Chebeague Island with residential services for elders who are no longer able to live independently. I serve as president of the Commons board.

The presence of our seven-bed facility means that islanders can remain in the community they know, amid family and friends. Over the past quarter-century, we have provided care for more than 150 people at the Commons or through our in-home care service. We employ 23 full- and part-time workers, many of whom commute to Chebeague from the mainland.

Now, more than ever, our survival is under threat. For this reason, we oppose LD 2214 and ask that the State provide realistic financial support at a level that will help ensure our continued operations. The \$10 million proposed in Gov. Mills' supplemental budget is a far cry from adequate considering the current level of need – and ignores the growing demand for elder services in coming years.

Too many small, rural facilities like ours have been forced to close for lack of funding. Reimbursement rates for MaineCare, upon which many of our elders depend, don't even come close to meeting the actual cost of care. We lose more than \$200 a day for each MaineCare resident, deficits that are rising and threaten our survival. Unlike many facilities, we do not cap the number of MaineCare beds. Our island community deserves no less. But our deficit climbs each year.

Maine is at the forefront of the demographic tidal wave of an aging America and should be leading the way in finding solutions that are compassionate, far-sighted and fiscally responsible. LD 2214 falls short on all these worthy goals.

Many of the elders we serve at the Island Commons spent their lifetimes building and supporting the community of Chebeague Island. All they ask now is to be able to spend their remaining years here. We owe it to them to make it possible. So, too, does the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Q. Stranahan".

Susan Q. Stranahan
President, Island Commons Board of Directors