



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 12, 2025

Testimony of Rep. Bill Bridgeo introducing
**LD 327, An Act to Provide Additional Funding to Support In-home Personal
Support Services for Qualified Senior Citizens**
Before the Health and Human Services Committee

Good afternoon, Sen. Ingwersen, Rep. Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Bill Bridgeo, and I represent House District 60, which is part of the great City of Augusta. I am here today to present **LD 327, An Act to Provide Additional Funding to Support In-home Personal Support Services for Qualified Senior Citizens**.

Although, technically speaking, I brought this bill forward at the request of a friend, retired Maine journalist John Hale (who will follow me as a proponent of the bill), I should state clearly that I believe that this bill addresses a significant problem in our state and that is the shortfall in funding to support in-home support services for Maine's senior population.

I'm certainly no expert in the various programs that exist in Maine to help seniors – those qualifying for MaineCare and others – but I know enough about the situation to appreciate that there is more need out there than there is funding, and that dollars spent keeping seniors from unnecessarily long hospital stays or from nursing home institutionalization is a prudent investment of scarce state resources – not to mention the humane thing to do.

I have learned from helpful conversations with DHHS leadership that there are several existing programs in place. Two are directed to seniors qualifying for MaineCare (Sections 19 and 96 of the department's relevant regulations) and one for seniors whose assets put them above MaineCare thresholds but who, as a practical matter, would struggle to afford in-home care (Section 63 of the regs).

LD 327, as drafted, would direct \$1 million a year to the MaineCare-eligible program. However, it appears that there is a lack of data about the true extent of the need as waiting lists are not currently maintained by the department.

For that reason, I'm in hopes the bill can be amended to direct the \$1 million in funding to the State Section 63 program and to require DHHS to establish such lists (My understanding is that Representative Cluchey has a resolve – LD 977 – that would charge the Maine Health Data Organization with doing just that).

I appreciate that we are in difficult budgetary times, but I really do believe that money invested in these in-home programs will, in the long run, be a net gain for the state – and for the Mainers who are thus able to remain in their homes.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I'm happy to answer questions to the extent I can.