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March 14, 2025

**Testimony in Support for LD 709: An Act to Establish the Respite for ME Program and
Testimony in Support of LD 815: An Act to Provide Funding for Respite Care and
Supplemental Services Provided by the Family Caregiver Support Program**

Good Morning, Chairs Ingwersen and Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, always nice to be with you

My name is Paul Armstrong. I live in Palermo and I am the Lead Volunteer Advocate for AARP Maine. Today, I am testifying in support of LD 709 and LD 815.

To begin we also want to thank Representative Cloutier for her work in bringing forward these critical bills that will help Maine's family caregivers. I was primary caregiver for my own father's final years so I feel qualified to tell you that this is an important issue. On top of that I am disabled and worried about my being able to stay in my own home. I, myself, get 2 hours of services a week which is invaluable to me due to my disability.

The nearly 155 million hours of unpaid care provided by the 166,000 caregivers in Maine is valued at 2.9 billion -at the current \$18.81 an hour- according to new state data available in AARP's latest report in the Valuing the Invaluable.¹

- In the United States, about 48 million individuals provide unpaid care to an adult family member or friend. Nearly eight in 10 caregivers report having routine out-of-pocket expenses related to looking after their loved ones. The typical annual total is significant: \$7,242. On average,

¹ - <https://states.aarp.org/maine/valuing-invaluable-report>

family caregivers are spending 26% of their income on caregiving activities, according to results of the national study of nearly 2,400 caregivers in the spring of 2021.²

- Most Maine adults age 45+ prefer to age in place with caregiver assistance
- Most also would prefer to receive care at home with caregiver assistance when the basic tasks of life become more difficult.
- Another 27% of respondents say that it is extremely or very likely that they will provide care on an unpaid basis to an adult loved one in the future.
- Finally, 85% of current or past caregivers said that they spend their own money on transportation, medical devices, direct care or home modifications, to help care for a loved one.

To continue to have family caregivers that provide this support to their loved ones it is time for Maine to support them. Together LD 815 and LD 709 will do that. The legislation before you seek to increase access to respite care for Maine's family caregivers. The legislation will do that by aligning Maine's respite care with the National Family Caregiver Support Program. The bill takes the lessons learned from the Respite for ME pilot programs and combines that with our existing respite services in Maine. This will expand eligibility for the state-funded respite program so more caregivers can access that critical support.

Maine's family caregivers give every day to our state. They do this often while not being thanked for their efforts, dwindling their savings and sacrificing their physical and mental health. We urge this committee to vote ought to pass on LD 709 and LD 815 to give back to the caregivers that give Maine so much.

Thank you,

Paul Armstrong
Palermo, Maine

² <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/ltss/family-caregiving/family-caregivers-cost-survey/>