

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Sara Gagné-Holmes
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Aging and Disability Services
11 State House Station
41 Anthony Avenue
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel; (207) 287-9200; Toll Free: (800) 262-2232
Fax (Disability) (207) 287-9915; Fax (Aging) (207) 287-9229
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Testimony of the Office of Aging and Disability Services
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
In support of LD 709, *An Act to Establish the Respite for ME Program*

Sponsor: Representative Cloutier

Hearing Date: March 14, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is James Moorhead, and I serve as the Healthy Aging Services Program Manager at the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. I am here today to testify in support of LD 709, *An Act to Establish the Respite for ME Program*. We are grateful for Rep. Cloutier's sponsorship of the bill.

The Department introduced this bill in response to the successful outcomes and features of the Respite for ME pilot program funded through Governor Mills' Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan. The bill repeals the current state-funded Respite Care Program and replaces it with the Respite for ME Program using the funds that are allocated to our current program. The Respite for ME pilot program expanded access to services for family caregivers across the state while using person-centered care planning to offer greater flexibility in the types of services reimbursed. The final evaluation report was submitted to this committee on January 21, 2025, and a recent Department blog summarizes its key findings.

In Maine, two distinct family caregiver support programs are administered by the Department and delivered by Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). The state-funded State Respite Care Program, established in 1989, serves individuals of any age with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. The federally funded National Family Caregiver Support Program, created in 2000 under the Older Americans Act, supports family caregivers of older adults, caregivers of people with dementia, and older relative caregivers.

The intended outcome of this bill is to utilize all federal, state, and local resources to establish a unified family caregiver services program, adopting the most effective features of Respite for ME while streamlining access for caregivers and simplifying administration for AAAs. More types of caregivers will benefit from respite care and supplemental services while maintaining service priority for family caregivers of individuals of any age with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and to make myself available for questions at the work session.