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

Greetings Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee On Health and Human Services. My name is Bridget Quinn, Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. 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.

You've heard from my colleague Paul Armstrong about the incredible work of Maine's family caregivers. I do not want to reiterate his points but take a moment to share with you the reality of two family caregivers I recently met and the support they are providing to their loved ones.

Both Charlene and Carole live in Scarborough, and they are each caring for a partner. When speaking to them about their experiences as caregivers in Maine, Carole shared currently to support her husband's ability to stay at home they are using the support of a home health aide. This is costing them nearly 900 dollars a month for 8 hours of care a week. Carole shared "our income and our expense are matched." However, though expensive the 8 hours of support she gets a week, broken into two 4-hour sessions, are the only time she "could focus and went through so many things I can do."

Charlene is also caring for her husband and spoke about some of the support they received with the pilot Respite for ME program that included using available funding to help cover the cost of a new wheelchair for her husband and ramp on their car. Charlene is also providing support for her husband while still working, like many caregivers.

Both Charlene and Carole talked about the fears they have as someone providing such critical care. Charlene shared with me that her "biggest concern is if I get sick," and Carole

offered “You feel like you’re a hairline away from disaster at any moment.” Both had great concerns about what happens if they need help or a hospital stay.

Respite is a critical support to family caregivers like Carole and Charlene who are essentially working 24/7 jobs while supporting their husbands. When asked about respite Charlene shared ““I would like a little bit of the respite for us to get away” and Carole said respite support would “provide safety for my husband keep him out of the nursing home and keep me sane.” These are the everyday realities of Maine’s family caregivers.

Caregivers like Charlene and Carole are on the front line of supporting loved ones. Caregivers like them are saving the state millions of dollars in MaineCare by allowing a loved one to age in place. LD 815 and LD 709 together take a critical step in better supporting those who are living in our communities and often silently providing this work.

We urge this committee to vote Ought to Pass on both LD 709 and LD 815 to support Maine’s vital caregivers who are already providing more than their fair share to Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, should you have questions for me I can be reached at bquinn@aarp.org.

Bridget Quinn
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