



Consumers for Affordable Health Care

Advocating the right to quality,
affordable health care for all Mainers.

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Testimony in support of LD 814, An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults

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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and other distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Jakob Giron, Policy Advocate with Consumers for Affordable Health Care. I am here today to testify in support of LD 814, An Act to Provide Funding to the Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Program to Support Older Adults.

Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates the right to quality, affordable health care for every person in Maine. As designated by Maine's Attorney General, CAHC serves as Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program (CAP), which operates a toll-free, statewide HelpLine. Our HelpLine staff fielded nearly 7,300 calls last year from people across Maine who needed help obtaining, keeping, using, or fixing problems with private health insurance. CAHC also serves as the Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare, and helps people apply for and navigate the enrollment process for MaineCare. It is with that background that we provide these comments.

LD 814 would provide additional resources to expand coordinated community programming for older adults to include case management and navigation services and provide ongoing funding to deliver services in each of the State's coordinated community program areas. We understand these services include linking older Mainers to resources that would help them stay in their homes and live in their communities.

Services include helping older Mainers understand when and how to enroll in Medicare, the federal health care program for older Americans. While CAHC does help people understand their health coverage options and enroll in coverage, our focus is on private coverage for people under age 65, and MaineCare. People who reach out to CAHC, who need assistance with Medicare, are often referred to their local Area Agency on Aging for help. Staff at the Triple A's have the expertise needed to better understand the intricacies of various Medicare plans. Guidance is often needed when people are nearing retirement and transitioning from employer-based coverage to Medicare. It is important to note that cuts have already been made and more likely at the federal level, to the Social Security Administration, another place people have been able to turn to for basic help with Medicare. We worry that Mainers will have less access to the information they need to enroll in a Medicare plan that best meets their health care needs.

We hope you will support LD 814. Thank you for listening to me today.