

In favor of LD 814: An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults.

Testimony given by Meredith Anderson on behalf of Michele Grivois, Program Support Specialist, Southern Maine Agency on Aging

Submitted on March 28, 2025

Dear Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Thank you for your public service and all you do for the state of Maine. My name is Meredith Anderson. I live in Scarborough and work at Southern Maine Agency on Aging. I am testifying on behalf of Michele Grivois.

I am a New Gloucester resident and work at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. I have had various roles over the last ten years helping our population; adults over age 60, adults with disabilities and caregivers.

I want to share why LD 814 is so important to our friends, family, neighbors and community. As someone who works with some of our most vulnerable community members, their stories and resiliency can be both heartbreaking and inspiring. I have spoken to many older adults who live alone and have no social support network. That means no one to check on them, no one to assist with a ride when their car is broken down or in the shop (if they have a car), no one to notice any physical, emotional or cognitive decline they may be experiencing, no one to notice any fraud or abuse, no one to help advocate at the doctor's office, no one to help fill out paperwork or decipher the mail, no one to pick up a prescription when they aren't feeling well, and no one to help fill in the various gaps in support that often emerge as we age.

This is where the Southern Maine Agency on Aging makes an immense difference in the lives of our community. Many people call with questions and not only get their questions answered but learn about additional resources that can assist with their overall wellness like nutritional support, heating assistance, opportunities for socialization, and financial aid programs.

I recently spoke with someone who was having a difficult time understanding her Medicare and Social Security benefits. She was afraid she would be paying premiums out of her limited SSI check. I was able to have a conference call with her and help resolve the confusion. She thanked me and said "I will be able to sleep tonight. I have been so worried about this."

This is just an example of a case we were able to solve with a phone call. Many clients require more support and home visits. Many clients need help completing applications and managing all the logistics of that process, including gathering documentation and requesting new benefit letters, birth certificates, etc. While these tasks can be time consuming, these are opportunities to assure Maine residents they are being taken care of and are valued. Clients often feel more comfortable coming forward with needs and accepting support once they have built trust with a staff member or volunteer. Going into the home allows for better care for Mainers, as it eases the transportation barrier and allows the provider to gain insight on other potential supports that might be needed. While there are more aging in place initiatives being developed, many clients still don't have access to consistent support to maintain independence due to financial and geographical barriers. Most importantly, this process builds up the dignity and independence of aging adults who have helped to build our state into the wonderful place it is.

LD 814 helps make our community a stronger and better place. I urge this committee to pass this bill as our state needs more funding to help continue to support our older population.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and for your care and commitment to the older adults in our state.

Michele Grivois

New Gloucester

Southern Maine Agency on Aging

Cumberland County