

## **Committee on Health and Human Services**

**Re: The Older Mainers Act, LD 814 - An act to provide funding to area agencies on aging for community-based services and programs to support older adults.**

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished Committee on Health and Human Services members, I am Caroline FreeSpirit, a retired resident of Standish, Maine. I have worked all my life and recently retired from the working world. I would like to share my insights into what changes occur when one leaves the working world and reorients one's life to that of a retired person.

There is a starting period of peace and relaxation when you realize you do not have to get up each day and travel to work. However, after about a week, there is a sense of separation from the world as everyone else continues on the treadmill of daily work. One's world begins to shrink as the people you used to interact with regularly start to drop off. Before you realize it, you can go a week or two without any personal contact with the outside world.

In addition to losing contact with the community around you, income loss begins to impact how much money you can spend on activities. I am acutely aware of the amount of gasoline I will need to buy every time I need to take my car and drive into Portland. This concern about travel expenses also wears away my ability to interact more with the outside community.

I have been lucky up to this point. I am able to attend the University of Southern Maine, where I am currently completing a degree in Social Work, and I am still able to pick up some per diem work to help sustain my retirement. Yet I am very aware of how lucky I am to be healthy and able to get about and keep my mind active. I worry for all the elders in Maine who have not been so blessed.

The life experience and wisdom accumulated by the elders of Maine is a natural asset that should be used to its best advantage and that is the reason I think it is so important to help keep the elders of Maine in community, and able to interact with all the residents here in this wonderful State.

Thank you