



Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Testimony in Support of L.D. 814, *An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for  
Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults*  
By Izzy Ostrowski on behalf of EqualityMaine

March 28, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Izzy Ostrowski, and I am the Director of Network for Older Adults and Community Engagement at EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We support the critical and necessary funding of Maine's Area Agencies on Aging via L.D. 814.

In Maine, which has the highest median age in the country, a high percentage of people identify as LGBTQ+ compared to other states; there are approximately 19,000 LGBTQ+ adults in Maine aged 50 and older, 7,000 of whom are 65 and older.<sup>1</sup> Despite recent gains in protections for the LGBTQ+ community, older adults have lifetimes of discrimination that have left them more likely to experience social, financial, physical, and mental health disparities, and at higher risk for developing chronic diseases, living in poverty, and experiencing social isolation.<sup>2</sup>

87% of Mainers aged 45 and older prefer to age in place.<sup>3</sup> However, LGBTQ+ older adults are four times less likely to have children and twice as likely to be single as their non-LGBTQ+ peers. They may also be estranged from their biological or legal family members if those people do not accept their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In the absence of people to rely on from their families of origin, LGBTQ+ people have a long history of creating chosen families, typically made up of friends, partners, ex-partners, and perhaps some relatives. Jim, an LGBTQ+ older adult living in Maine with his husband, shared the following about his desire to age in place, "My husband and I continue to be self-supporting due in large part to our extraordinarily generous landlord of 16 years, the support services of HEAL (Health Equity Alliance), and relatively good health. That of course could change at any time and either of us would then need assistance with housing, healthcare, and meals to supplement Social Security income. We would prefer to remain in our own living space and care for each other, or ourselves, independently for as long as possible".

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<sup>1</sup> "Adult LGBT Population in the United States." *The Williams Institute, UCLA*, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Adult-US-Pop-Dec-2023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Fredriksen-Goldsen, Karen I, et al. "Health Disparities among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Older Adults: Results from a Population-Based Study." *American Journal of Public Health*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3770805/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3770805/).

<sup>3</sup> "Family Caregivers in Maine Provide 2.9 Billion in Unpaid Care to Loved Ones." *Maine*, 17 Oct. 2024, [states.aarp.org/maine/valuing-invaluable-report](https://states.aarp.org/maine/valuing-invaluable-report).

Services and programs that Area Agencies on Aging provide are comprehensive and address the emotional, physical, financial, and basic needs of older adults living in Maine. Lorraine, an 86 year old LGBTQ+ older adult, shared the following, “The Agency on Aging has been very valuable to me and my wife. Balance and potential falls are a major concern for us as we age and the Agency on Aging has offered a proven program of modified Tai Chi to help elders with balance. We have participated in those programs. In addition to that, the Agency on Aging has supported meals for the monthly dinners we attend with the Network for Older Adults, a very important social contact for us”. By building out Agency on Aging services and programs, critical early intervention and preventative care will allow thousands of Mainers statewide to not only age in place but thrive in their communities.

We urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on L.D. 814. Please ensure that older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers in Maine have access to life saving supports and services provided by Area Agencies on Aging.

Thank you,

Izzy Ostrowski (she/her)