



Testimony of Gerard Queally, President and CEO of Spectrum Generations, the Central Maine Area Agency on Aging

To Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services 132nd Maine Legislature, First Regular Session

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

Submitted March 28, 2025

Honorable Senate Chair Henry Ingwersen and Honorable House Chair Michelle Meyer and all other Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services Committee,

I am Gerard Queally, a resident of Brunswick, Maine and the President and CEO of Spectrum Generations, the Central Maine Area Agency on Aging.

I am here to express my staunch support for LD 814, *An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults*. Within Maine's aging network, this bill is known as the Older Mainer's Act.

I do not envy the position this Committee nor the entire Legislature, both Democrat and Republican, finds itself in meeting competing community demand with limited fiscal resources. You have tough choices ahead, and I pray that wisdom and discernment guide your decisions.

You are aware that Maine's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) play a vital role in providing critical services, which include meal programs, transportation, caregiver support, and health and wellness initiatives. These programs not only enhance the quality of life for older adults but also enable them to remain in their homes and communities, maintaining their independence and dignity.

Maine's demographic trends underscore the urgency of this issue. Maine is the "oldest" state in the nation, with a rapidly growing older adult population. By 2040, 30% of Maine's population projects to be sixty-five and older, compared to 20% nationwide. Recent data shows substantial growth in older age groups, with a 22.8% increase in the 75 to 79 age range and a 16.5% rise in those aged 80 to 84 from 2020 to 2023.

Testimony today will describe the challenges faced by traditional demographics and how difficult it is to meet these challenges at current funding levels. It is true there are waitlists and there are older adults in Maine whose needs are not met. The AAAs, and the state, are falling behind in our ability to deliver basic service deliveries like home delivered meals to all that qualify, and real case management to those who struggle to find help in the state's complex bureaucratic system.

Additionally, you will hear testimony regarding how the services provided by Maine's AAAs prevent social isolation, assist in benefit navigation, are cost effective alternatives to frequent emergency department visits, long hospitalizations, and prevent and/or postpone entry into long-term care. All of that is true, 1000%.

Older Mainer's Act (LD 814) is more than meeting today's needs; tomorrow is right around the corner. Maine's AAAs are seriously unprepared to meet the attitudes and expectations of Maine's emerging older adults; the adults who are just starting to enter their sixth decade of life. This cohort of adults have a great desire for independence, want personalized services, want services that are integrated with technology, expect a holistic approach to community health, demand quality and accountability, and desire meaningful social engagement. These taxpayers feel they paid for such services during their working lives and will expect impactful services in their waning years.

Currently there is no state plan that accounts for these late-Baby Boomers and the first wave of Generation X. The Governor's Cabinet on Aging is silent on the issue of the next generation of older adults in Maine. But that does not mean the AAAs should remain silent. It cannot be business as usual for the AAAs; we too must change.

If the 132nd Legislature fully funds the Older Mainer's Act (LD 814) Spectrum Generations is committed to:

1. Not having Meals on Wheels waitlist for the near future (current state and federal funding covers only 60% of need).
2. Fully fund a Community Connections Liaison (current funding expires April 2025).
3. Hire one full-time employee to broker In-Home Services (homemaker, chore, transportation, Personal Support Services, and Adult Day Services). These are the services older adults and/or caregivers want.
4. Fund In-Home Services at the community-demand level of \$750,000; providing the needed financial support to enable older adults to remain in their homes and the community.
5. Keep our Help-line open till 8pm on weekdays and 10am to 2pm on Saturdays.

6. Conduct six additional Family Caregiver support groups, serving at least sixty caregivers.
7. Serve two hundred additional Mainers with evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention classes.
8. Serve 250 more people via complex case management/social care coordination; we currently have the capacity to serve twelve.
9. Provide social dining at 2-3 more sites within central Maine, serving an additional 1,000 unduplicated people.
10. One employee fully dedicated to year-round Medicare counseling/education.
11. Commit to using artificial intelligence (AI) to improve consumer experience and service delivery decision making.
12. Expand our public education/outreach to reach underserved communities, ensuring all older adults in central Maine are aware of the services we provide.

LD 814 brings the AAAs into the 21st century; we can no longer afford to allow Maine's older adults to languish using last century's methods of service delivery.

As I stated at the start of this testimony, I do not envy your position. Tough choices lay ahead. While I urge the committee to vote in favor of LD 814 and to prioritize the well-being of Maine's older adults. I understand this may not be fiscally possible. Therefore, I have only one request. If funding LD 814 is unavailable, I request this Committee direct the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) to reduce its unnecessary overregulated oversight of the AAAs. Smart regulations and oversight of taxpayers' dollars, I absolutely support. However, the amount of unnecessary constant monitoring, data collection, quality checks, contracting and budget machinations the AAAs are routinely subjected, do not improve service delivery (as currently administered) but only adds unnecessary expense and stress to a system that is teetering on fiscal and emotional bankruptcy. We are not enriching uranium but are helping older adults live in the community. To enable cost effective service delivery, we should be regulated according to our mission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.