



# SeniorsPlus

**Testimony of Betsy Sawyer-Manter, President and CEO of SeniorsPlus, the Agency on Aging for Western Maine.**

**To Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services 132<sup>nd</sup> 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***

Good Day, Senator Ingwersen and Representative Michelle Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services Committee, I am Betsy Sawyer-Manter, the President CEO and of SeniorsPlus.

I am testifying 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*. I will refer to it as the Older Mainers Act.

You have heard and will continue to hear and read testimony that shares the stories of the invaluable services that the Agencies on Aging deliver to older Mainers. I want to focus my testimony on the return on investment that we realize when we invest in these low-cost preventive and early

- **Just by keeping 103 older Mainers out of Medicaid-funded nursing homes annually, this \$9.75 million investment will have paid for itself.**

Today, MaineCare spends an estimated \$258.55 per day (\$94,371 annually) to house someone in a nursing home, while it costs less than \$10 per day to provide Meals on Wheels services. According to the national 2024 Cost of Care Report, Maine has one of the highest nursing home costs in the country. We ranked 9<sup>th</sup> most expensive in the nation for a semi-private room. Non MaineCare costs of a nursing home bed in Maine averages \$155,125.

SeniorsPlus' experience of providing home-based services to older adults is that nearly 100% of people prefer to stay in their own homes. Even with a Maximus assessment deeming them nursing home level of care, they can safely and quite independently remain in their homes with a low level of support. Based on the historical impact of Meals on Wheels and case management, we can anticipate that the older Mainers Act will divert far more older adults from nursing homes, more than paying for itself.

- Family caregivers are the backbone of long-term care in Maine. Of the 166,000 family caregivers in Maine, 61% are employed provide and yet still provide 155 million hours of unpaid care, representing an economic value of \$2.9 billion.

More than half of family caregivers who have jobs report going in late, leaving early, or needing to take time off to care for loved ones. **The Older Mainers Act would enable more**

**family caregivers to stay in the workforce through support, respite and access to other services.**

- The Older Mainers Act would **keep over \$3.6 million in Mainers' pockets** per year by expanding the number of people who can benefit from Medicare counseling, information, and resources.

Medicare volunteers contribute over 92,000 hours of service, valued at nearly \$2.8 million of volunteer labor annually. LD 814 would increase the Agencies' capacity to build their volunteer corps even more.

As impressive as all these data points are, I would also like to point out a qualitative ROI. Agencies on Aging serve all older adults in our communities. We have very few services that are means tested, rather our services are needs based. The recognition that all older people may need assistance navigating the care, food and income security systems as well as maintaining quality community engagement is a central value.

Our older adults make up a large swath of the fabric of our communities. They own property, they contribute to the tax base, they work, and they volunteer in civic and nonprofit roles. I believe that valuing this ROI contributes not to just supporting the older Mainer but in fact benefits all of us.

I ask you to support this important work. Budgets represent our values and priorities, and this bill is a testament to the value we place on older Mainers, their families and communities.

Thank you for your time.

I am available to provide additional information if it is helpful.

Respectfully Submitted,

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