



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Kristen Cloutier

33 Charles St.
Lewiston, ME 04240
Phone: (207) 807-1637
Kristen.Cloutier@legislature.maine.gov

March 28, 2025

Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier presenting

LD 814, An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults *Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Kristen Cloutier, and I represent House District 94, which includes part of my hometown of Lewiston. I am pleased to sponsor **LD 814, An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults.**

As we age, maintaining an engaged and active lifestyle becomes increasingly important. Social connections and community participation are essential for mental, emotional and physical well-being, and social networks become a crucial component of daily life.

Maine's Area Agencies on Aging provide valuable services that transform the lives of many Mainers. These agencies deliver meals, offer support to family caregivers, provide expert guidance on insurance and prescription benefits, and connect aging and disabled Mainers with appropriate community resources. Perhaps their most significant contribution is creating communities for seniors – spaces that foster social interaction, learning and care.

There is immense need among older Mainers. Maine is the oldest state in the nation with over 320 million people ages 65 and over (23% of our total population). Yet over half (52%) of single older Mainers lack the resources to support their basic needs, and 25% of Mainers 65 and over live alone.

Passing LD 814 is not only critical to supporting our aging neighbors, family members, and friends, but it is a smart investment for Maine. LD 814 would enhance coordinated community programming for older adults by incorporating case management and navigation services statewide. Case management services would give older Mainers continuous support to navigate the complex system of aging to help facilitate timely care transitions, reduce unnecessary institutionalization, ensure the utilization of approved services and provide support for caregivers. Adding case management into the Agencies' core services not only enhances the quality of life for

older Mainers but also yields substantial cost savings for individuals and the healthcare system as a whole.

Additionally, The Older Mainers Act would establish continuous funding to develop programs and deliver services for seniors across all of the State's coordinated community program areas, including the critical Meals on Wheels and Medicare counseling programs.

It costs less than \$10 per day to enroll someone in Meals on Wheels, which is staffed mostly by volunteers with the support and leadership of the Area Agencies on Aging across the state. The program, among many others that the Agencies offer, is proven to significantly decrease the risk of hospitalization and ER visits, reduce nursing home placements and reduce Medicare reimbursement costs for participants.

If the Area Agencies on Aging can keep only 103 older Mainers out of Medicaid-funded nursing homes annually, the Older Mainers Act will have paid for itself. By strengthening these services and programs with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, the Older Mainers Act represents an investment in the health and resilience of our communities that will benefit generations to come.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.