



SeniorsPlus

Testimony on LD 2212
February 18, 2026

An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027 (LD 2212)

Good day Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Betsy Sawyer-Manter and I am the President and CEO at SeniorsPlus, the Agency on Aging in Western Maine. I am testifying neither for nor against LD 2212 but rather to point out a significant omission in the proposed supplemental spending.

During the last session, this committee recognized the need to address a funding shortfall for services to older adults and adults with disabilities and appropriated \$ 3 million dollars statewide to help alleviate that shortfall. Unfortunately, the funding was one time funding to address an ongoing need that is growing in real time. There is no funding indicated in LD 2212 to address this need.

The need is real as you can see from the two stories of Richard and Stephen who were both assisted through the use of this one-time discretionary funding.

These are their stories with their own words:

Richard – Meals on Wheels

Richard was referred to SeniorsPlus through his case worker who said he lacked resources and was **“literally starving” to death due to lack of food** and other resources. Richard scored extremely high on the waitlist criteria and is currently receiving meals through Discretionary Funding.

“I’ve been going through a weight loss issue and my medical staff have been worried. My EBT was cut back from \$130 to now \$66 a month. I don’t understand why. I rely on that

money and is my only financial source for food. I use the \$66 mostly for fluids. Meals on Wheels is a godsend! I'm actually gaining weight! As far as affordability, I'm on a tight budget and I don't have any other money to eat. Meals on Wheels are awesome! I'm eating things I have never eaten before. There isn't one meal I've complained of. SeniorsPlus staff are awesome and personable. **I don't have transportation or local family or friends for support and have mobility issues.** Because I do, it is difficult for me to get to food pantries. **If I were to suddenly be unable to receive Meals on Wheels, I will again go without food.** If that happens, I will take one day at a time like I did before connecting with Meals on Wheels."

Discretionary funding has, in this case, been the difference between starvation and stability.

Stephen – Transportation for Cataract Surgery

Stephen uses a wheelchair and worked tirelessly to regain upper body mobility after once being unable to move from the neck down. Later, severe cataracts left him legally blind. Though approved for surgery, he had no way to afford the multiple medical transportation trips required for treatment.

*"It worked out really really good. I ended up – I'm in a wheelchair without a van – needing rides - I had a lotta doctor appointments including getting my cataracts done in both eyes which ended up being ten trips at least – and the cost of the trips were really a lot more than I ever imagined. You people helped me – I was able to get the trips done. **Being able to get this surgery is the best thing that has ever happened to me – I couldn't see even to read they were so bad, and now I have 20/20 vision with no glasses – it's just amazing. It's such a life change.** I can read to write checks, and to read my bills, and read stuff that comes – and I couldn't before... this changed everything. It's amazing. It is the best thing people have – [their eyesight] – it was life changing for me since I can't walk – it was strange to not see, but I can now! **You helped me get there. I only have Social Security so I don't have a lot of ability to go to those things without help and you helped me.**"*

By providing transportation assistance through discretionary funds, Stephen was able to access surgery that completely restored his sight. The support preserved both his financial stability and his independence.

There are many more stories just like these from older Mainers across the state being directly benefited in life saving and life changing ways. These are folks who have worked their entire lives and ask for very little in return.

We, at SeniorsPlus, have a current Meals on Wheels waitlist of 191 (and growing by the day). And that is the amount of people waiting after we used discretionary funding to remove people. We anticipate having a waitlist of 505 on October 1, 2026 without additional resources. We are just one of 5 Agencies on Aging in Maine who are facing

removing people from services in July and continuously adding others waiting for assistance across programs such as nutrition, transportation, home repair, care giving, and case management.

This committee recognized the need to support older Mainers during the last session. We appreciate that recognition and support and ask for consideration of increased, continued permanent funding.

Thank you for your consideration,

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