

Testimony of Meredith Anderson, Scarborough, Maine

Submitted on February 18, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for all the ways you thoughtfully consider the needs of all Mainers, including the older Mainers in our state.

My name is Meredith Anderson. I live in Scarborough and work at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging. We receive calls every day from individuals who are facing barriers to accessing the support we all need to live well in our own communities. Area Agencies on Aging make an immense difference in connecting people with essential supports such as housing, benefit programs, nutrition, and insurance counseling and what's more, we help older adults and their caregivers stay connected.

One individual, Fred, 75, who lives alone in a rural area has reported going long stretches without company and feeling isolated. Driving has become unsafe for Fred due to a painful medical condition. Meals on Wheels deliveries became a necessity, not a convenience as a result. "Standing up or sitting down for too long is hard for me. I don't want things to happen when I'm driving, so I'm grateful to have meals delivered." Fred added, "I called Meals on Wheels to make sure I had enough food. I especially like the breakfast meals, I think they help keep up my health."

Fred found the food helps sustain independence and the companionship seems to matter just as much to him. "I've had my Meals on Wheels volunteer driver, delivering to me for some time now and we're friends. I signed up for Meals on Wheels for the outside contact as much as I did for the food." Fred is honest about what the emotional side of rural living can feel like. "I feel isolated sometimes, and sometimes I feel lonely, I don't mind admitting it." To help stay connected, Fred also has a Phone Pal through SMAA. Fred stated, "I really enjoy my Phone Pal. The only other phone calls I get are for medical appointments, and rides from a transportation program, so I call them or they call me, but what I really need is calls from friends. My phone pal and I have similar interests; we love to share our history, as she is 90 years old."

For Fred, Meals on Wheels and Phone Pals offer both nourishment and connection. "Southern Maine Agency on Agency goes out of their way to look after me. My MOWs driver goes above and beyond. I appreciate all they do for me. It would be very difficult to continue living alone without Southern Maine Agency on Aging's meal delivery and social support."

Please consider funding services for older adults in Maine to further demonstrate your continued commitment to ensuring older Mainers and caregivers have access to what they need to live well.

Thanks so much,

Meredith Anderson, LCSW

**Client name in this story has been changed. Names of volunteers have also been removed.