

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

To Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, 132nd Maine Legislature, Second Regular Session

Against LD 2212: 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

Submitted February 18, 2026

Honorable Senate Chair Margaret Rotundo, Honorable House Chair Drew Gattine, and Honorable Ranking Member Jack Ducharme and all other Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

My name is Gerard Queally. I am the President and CEO of Spectrum Generations, the Central Maine Area Agency on Aging, a position I have held for the past 15 years.

I am here today **in opposition to LD 2212 as currently constructed**, specifically the Governor's FY26–27 Supplemental Budget Proposal that eliminates the one-time \$3 million allocation to Maine's Area Agencies on Aging.

I want to briefly remind the Committee how we arrived at this moment.

In December of 2024, LD 814—*An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs to Support Older Adults*, commonly referred to as the Older Mainers Act—was drafted and ultimately approved by both chambers of this 132nd Legislature. That legislation requested **\$9.75 million** to meet existing community demand for core services such as Meals on Wheels, as well as newer, cost-effective interventions including expedited home repairs, expanded in-home supports, and case-management navigation.

That \$9.75 million figure was not aspirational. It was based on documented, current need. Had it been funded, it would have eliminated waitlists statewide.

This Committee was unable to fund the full request, but it did allocate a **one-time \$3 million appropriation**, which I publicly described as an effort to “hold the line.” For that, I said thank you—and I repeat that thanks today.

But let me be clear: the \$3 million did not solve the problem. It merely slowed the rate of decline.

Even with that funding, **all five Area Agencies on Aging were forced to cut core services and lay off staff**. Today, Maine has statewide **Meals on Wheels waitlist of more than 900 people**. The line is not holding. It is bending.

In fiscal terms, without the \$3 million, the Agencies on Aging would have experienced a **\$1.8 million reduction in FY26**. The one-time allocation resulted in a net increase of only **\$1.2 million above FY25 levels**—still **dramatically below** the identified \$9.75 million needed to meet current demand.

At Spectrum Generations alone, we are adding **approximately 15 people every week** to our Meals on Wheels waitlist.

Now we are arriving at LD 2212, the point at which the Legislature must decide whether to stabilize or further erode this system.

The Governor’s FY26–27 Supplemental Budget Proposal not only fails to fund the original \$9.75 million request—it **eliminates the \$3 million entirely**.

If enacted as proposed, the consequences are immediate and not hypothetical:

- Additional staff layoffs
- Reductions across *all* core services
- Elimination of newly implemented efficiencies and innovations
- And a **tripling of waitlists statewide**

Under this proposal, the Meals on Wheels waitlist will **be near 3,000 older Mainers**.

What makes this moment different from many other difficult budget decisions is that investments in Area Agency on Aging services are not just compassionate, they are fiscally responsible. The services we provide delay or prevent far more costly outcomes, including emergency room utilization, hospitalizations, and premature nursing facility placement. In short, AAA services save the State of Maine money, and the return on investment is well

established: modest investments in community-based supports avoid significantly higher Medicaid and health care costs downstream.

I understand that difficult choices must be made among many competing priorities and limited state resources, and I appreciate the work this Committee and the Legislature do to balance those demands.

I was here on February 3rd to celebrate the first-ever Older Mainers Day alongside this Legislature. On that day, the Legislature took an important step and sent a clear message to older Mainers across this state: we see you, we value your contributions, and we recognize the challenges you face.

Today, the Legislature can take the next step—to pair that meaningful recognition with a wise and practical investment. By restoring this funding, you can send a clear and tangible message to older Mainers that the State of Maine is not only grateful for their contributions but also committed to supporting their ability to age safely, independently, and with dignity.

I will close with this.

In my former life, I served 30 years in the United States Navy and retired as a Captain. One of my most fundamental responsibilities was to report, accurately and without spin, my unit's readiness to carry out its mission. To do otherwise would have been a failure of command responsibility.

So, in that same spirit, I report to you today:

My agency's ability to meet mission is severely degraded.

If the \$3 million is not permanently reinstated, **I will not be able to hold the line.**

This is not a future problem. It is a present-day operational reality.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Caring Through the Storm

Seven years ago, John Newby's life changed dramatically. He became a full-time caretaker for his wife Venus, who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's at age 53.

"We have been married for 35 years," he said, "and this disease has profoundly changed our lives."

John chose to care for Venus, who now needs total care at home rather than place her in a nursing facility. This decision he said, has come with significant emotional and financial strain.

Because of her age and limited work history, she did not qualify for disability benefits or MaineCare, and John was forced to leave his permanent job as a physician to care for her.

Living in Harpswell, Maine, winter storms frequently knock out power in their community. Years ago, they experienced a twelve-day power outage during severe winter weather. Making matters worse, their home relies on electric heat pumps, and the memory of those conditions has stayed with them ever since.

Working with Spectrum Generations, the couple was able to acquire an external whole-house generator — something they could not have achieved on their own.

John said, "Knowing we now have a reliable source of power brings us an immense sense of safety and peace of mind. Your generosity has made a meaningful and lasting difference in our lives during an incredibly difficult time."

The couple was equally grateful for the step-by-step guidance they received from Spectrum Generations' staff in helping them obtain heating assistance to get them through the winter.



John and Venus Newby at their Harpswell home.

Your generosity has made a meaningful and lasting difference in our lives during an incredibly difficult time.

"At a time when we felt overwhelmed and unsure where to turn, your staff treated us with kindness, patience, and dignity," he said. "You did more than provide resources — you helped us navigate them."

John said the agency truly embodies its mission to enrich lives and help people age safely and comfortably in their homes. "Your support — along with the vital services you provide to older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers — offers hope and stability to families like ours who are struggling quietly," John said.

"Please know how deeply thankful we are. Your compassion and commitment have helped us feel safer, supported, and less alone."

Within the \$767,813 of state discretionary funding under LD 814, "The Older Mainers Act," 85% of the funds supported existing services like Meals on Wheels, outreach and Chore to meet the urgent needs and critical programming for older and disabled adults. To continue this program at its current level of community support, state funding will be necessary.



RAMPING UP REPAIRS PROGRAM

A Somerset County Success Story

When Laureanne first heard about the Ramping Up Repairs Program after reading about it in the Spectrum Generations newsletter, she was very excited. The program, a new initiative started last fall, is aimed at helping older and disabled adults with common home repair projects.

"I see that and I say, oh my God I need to call," she said. "I was so happy."

The signing-up process she said was straight-forward and easy. She picked up the phone and two weeks later, work started on her home.

Ramping Up Repairs was launched with a one-time \$100,000 allocation from Spectrum Generations' \$767,813 in state discretionary funding under LD 814, "The Older Mainer's Act." While 85% of these funds supported existing services like Meals on Wheels and outreach, Ramping Up Repairs was introduced to meet urgent home repair needs for older and disabled adults. To continue this program, new funding sources or further state support will be necessary.

David Cornforth, the Ramping Up Repair Program Manager, first visited her Somerset County home in early October. A quick evaluation of the property confirmed the house needed immediate repairs.

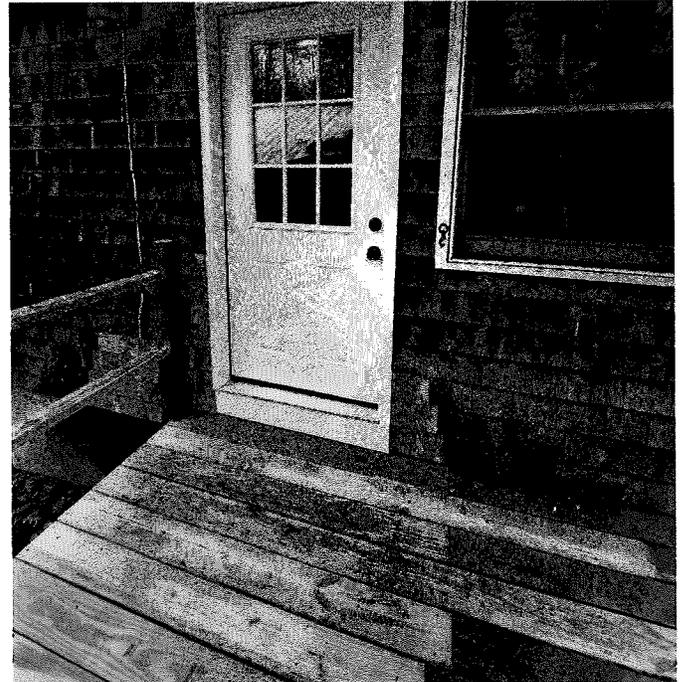
Although not all repairs identified were completed, Cornforth said two doors and a section of her deck were repaired.

"We were able to repair her deck and replace two doors that were not closing properly, allowing air into her home and reducing her ability to stay warm," he said.

Additionally, her roof was in bad shape and there was noticeable water damage in her kitchen. Cornforth was able to connect her to a partner agency who agreed she needed a full roof replacement and completed the job within a week.

"They were very quick," Laureanne said. "I couldn't believe it-- it's like someone said one, two, three and it was done."

She is extremely happy with the results of her repairs and with the entire process and said she would recommend the program "100-percent" to anyone needing repairs. "For me, this program is the best in the world...They



installed beautiful new doors that let in the light," she said. "When they fixed my deck, that was another blessing."

Cornforth says that through the collective teamwork of Spectrum Generations' Nutrition and Community Services teams, "we were able to coordinate and fund this project through our Ramping Up Repair Program. We are very pleased to know we have another older adult who will remain in her home, a little warmer, safer, and dryer!"

To sustain larger repair projects such as this one, qualified volunteers are needed. If you are knowledgeable in home repair, and are interested in lending a hand, contact Volunteer Coordinator Alison Linscott, at (207) 620-1684, or email alinscott@spectrumgenerations.org for a rewarding opportunity.

To find out more about the Ramping Up Repairs program, call Community Service Manager, David Cornforth, at (207) 620-6364.

Small Help with Cleaning Life-Changing Impact



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Nancy is the widow of a veteran and has lived at an affordable housing complex for nearly 12 years. She lives alone with her beloved cat, Tom. Unable to read or write, she has no children or known relatives and never knew her parents.

She has an individual appointed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, who manages her finances, and she relies heavily on the support available within her housing community.

Recently, Nancy experienced an extremely traumatic medical emergency. It was her first time in an ambulance, and the ordeal frightened her. She spent a week in the hospital and is now home, slowly recovering and improving each day.

As a result of this emergency, her apartment needed to be cleaned and disinfected to prevent a health hazard. Nancy did not have the ability—physically or financially—to address this, and returning home under those conditions would have forced her to relive a deeply traumatic experience.

Through the generosity of Spectrum Generations' Chore program, a professional cleaning company was hired to thoroughly clean the carpet and walls. Nancy was able to return home to a clean, safe apartment—without any visible reminders of her medical emergency, which would have been traumatic otherwise. This made an enormous difference in her emotional well-being and sense of security.

It was her first time in an ambulance, and the ordeal frightened her.

The outcome was made possible through the exceptional collaboration with Spectrum Generations staff. Kindness, professionalism, willingness to step in, and one-time state allocated funding helped ensure that Nancy was able to return home with dignity, comfort, and peace.

Within the \$767,813 of state discretionary funding under LD 814, "The Older Mainers Act," 85% of the funds supported existing services like Meals on Wheels, Outreach and Chore to meet the urgent needs and critical programming for older and disabled adults. To continue these programs at current levels of community support, state funding will be necessary.

Pseudonym used to maintain privacy.

Emergency Repairs Keep a Kennebec County Resident Home



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We recently received an urgent call from a municipality in Kennebec County wondering if we could help one of their residents from a distressing situation.

The resident had just returned home from a seven-day hospital stay only to discover his house had no heat and the water pipes were frozen. The toilet was also cracked and there was no running water.

According to the town official, the house was in a state of disrepair because the resident did not have the means to pay for services needed.

Additionally, the resident was battling several ailments, including throat cancer, which caused another barrier as he could barely talk and could not communicate effectively.

The town had limited funds and could not shoulder the costs of paying for a hotel while a plan could be solidified. They were also hoping the resident would not have to stay in a shelter through this ordeal.

Working with Spectrum Generations Ramping Up Repairs program, a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) partner was secured and a plan was launched.

That same day, HVAC professionals were assessing the project to determine the best course of action so the resident would not become homeless.

The first item they tackled was replacing the toilet and affected pipes. Next they provided temporary space heaters in the home to keep it warm and repaired as many pipes as they could to have running water.

This quick resolution was able to keep the resident in their home over the weekend and avoid potential hospitalization, or use of town funds for a hotel. This fix was all made possible by the discretionary funds given to Spectrum Generations in 2026 budget.

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The connection made between our agency and the HVAC partner, is also the main reason this was possible. The relationship between the two organizations formed through the Ramping Up Repairs program, and their commitment to the resident, was the reason they were able to drop everything and help this individual on a Friday afternoon to avoid becoming homeless or being placed in a shelter after just getting out of the hospital.

There's still a lot of work to be done in the home. This call to action by Spectrum Generations and their HVAC partner led to a long-term solution and kept a resident in their home, without the need of a shelter. This resident did not want to ask for help but turned to the local municipality for help.

Ramping Up Repairs was launched with a one-time \$100,000 allocation from Spectrum Generations' \$767,813 in state discretionary funding under LD 814, "The Older Mainers Act." While 85% of these funds supported existing services like Meals on Wheels and Outreach, Ramping Up Repairs was introduced to meet urgent home repair needs for older and disabled adults. To continue this program, new funding sources or further state support will be necessary.

Collaboration and Community Investment helps preserve a home

In senior housing, many older adults live one crisis away from losing their homes. For those facing mental health challenges, hoarding behaviors, addiction, or declining health, even a single setback can threaten both their housing and wellbeing.

This is the story of how collaboration and community partnership helped one resident avoid that outcome.

A long-term resident—an elderly woman living alone with significant mental health challenges—was facing a lease violation due to unsafe apartment conditions. What began as clutter had escalated into hoarding, putting her safety and tenancy at risk. As her anxiety grew and her health declined, she stopped opening mail, attending appointments, and preparing meals. Eviction became a real possibility.

The resident service coordinator (RSC) discovered she had also lost critical supports, including MaineCare and Meals on Wheels. Her situation was not the result of neglect, but of being completely overwhelmed. She was isolated, exhausted, and unable to navigate the system alone.

Once the lease violation was identified, the property manager initiated a coordinated response. Maintenance staff approached the situation with professionalism and respect, while the RSC focused on building trust, identifying root causes, and creating a path to stability.

Spectrum Generations was part of this path.

The RSC reconnected the resident to essential services. With support from Spectrum Generations' Community Services Specialist (CSS), her MaineCare coverage was restored, allowing her to reestablish primary and mental

health care. This access became the foundation for recovery.

Spectrum Generations also addressed her immediate food insecurity through emergency meals, Meals on Wheels, and an on-site congregate meal program—helping her regain strength and stability.

Most critically, Spectrum Generations provided grant-funded emergency assistance through the

Chore program, making it possible to hire a commercial cleaning service.

The apartment was restored to safety standards, the lease violation resolved, and eviction prevented.

Because of coordinated support, compassion, and community investment, this resident remains safely housed—connected to services, managing her health, and living in a clean, safe home.

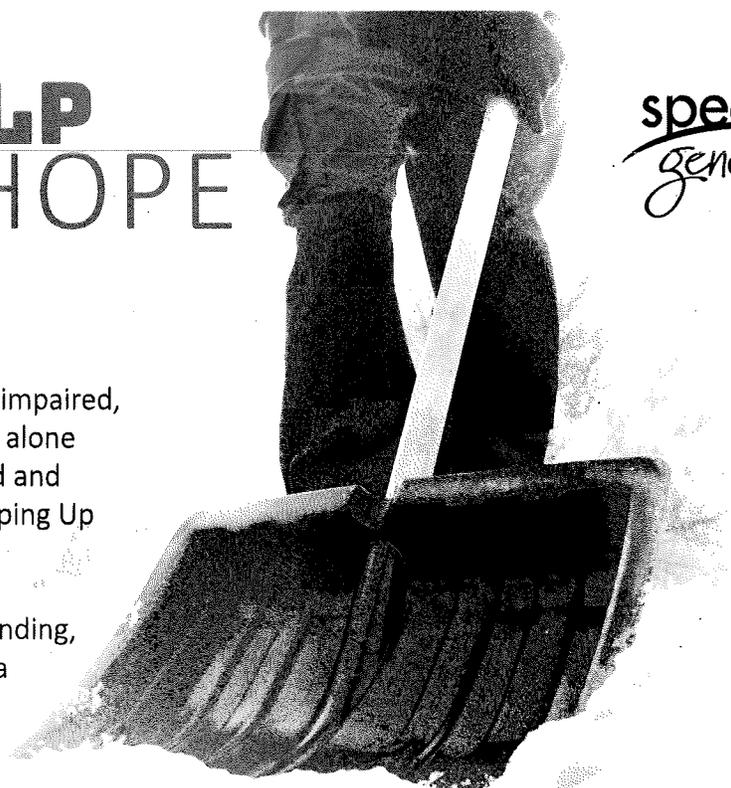
This case shows what's possible when housing management, service coordination, and community partners work together with a shared commitment.

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WINTER HELP LASTING HOPE

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Patricia is in her late seventies, is visually impaired, homebound, and lives on a fixed income alone in her Brunswick home. She was assessed and qualified for Spectrum Generations' Ramping Up Repairs program.

Using the one-time state discretionary funding, a plan was made to install grab bars and a basement handrail for her safety. During the home visit with Community Services Manager, David, additional support options were discussed, including covering the cost of plowing, shoveling, salting, and sanding through the Chore program. Come spring, the program would also cover mowing and outdoor cleanup.

Patricia also has a leaky roof and is required by her insurance company to replace it. Case Manager, Michele Melanson said Patricia found out about the roof repair and an ensuing deadline, right before Christmas and has been in despair since then trying to come up with a solution on her own.

Even though she has limited means, Patricia says she can afford the roof payment. Any help with the plowing and other winter maintenance tasks would ease her finances significantly and allow her to pay off the roof debt much sooner.

"This would be amazing!" Patricia said. "You don't understand how this just makes my day. I never thought that just sitting down with you today (David) was going to go like this. Thank you, thank you!"

On February 4, Patricia's case manager emailed David, noting that our services brought tears of joy to her eyes and greatly improved her outlook.

Stories such as this illustrate human dignity and

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doing the right thing for a neighbor in need. Programs such Ramping Up Repairs and Chore provide needed services to those who are at an economic disadvantage and restores hope for the human spirit.

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