

Testimony for 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).

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Bangor, Maine
Eastern Area Agency on Aging
Penobscot County

February 18, 2026

Dear 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:

My name is Tamara Bryant, and I am here today to testify that there should be ongoing funding for Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging in the supplemental budget, and currently there is not.

As a long-time Board Member of Eastern Area Agency on Aging, I volunteered to contact the nearly 300 consumers on our Meals on Wheels waitlist to do a reassessment on each.

While I was aware of the waitlist, it wasn't until I started speaking with these people that I fully appreciated the vulnerability of this population.

These folks are homebound. Nearly all are dealing with multiple issues. Very low incomes, lack of transportation, very severe physical disabilities and profound loneliness and isolation. Their worlds have become very small. Imagine not being able to leave your home.

Stroke, heart failure, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, COPD, amputations, dementia and poor eyesight are common. Most need assistance to get around via wheelchairs, walkers and canes.

The woman who has arthritis so severe she told me she can't peel a potato.

The wife who is partially paralyzed from a stroke and incontinent being cared for by the husband in a wheelchair. He has heart disease and a pacemaker.

The gentleman in rural Washington County with esophageal cancer who can't chew and asked me to make note he needed puréed meals.

The disabled woman whose rent is nearly 75% of her social security check.

During my calls I found one woman without heat, another had frozen water lines.

These are examples of what our volunteer MOW drivers encounter and can report back to the Agency for follow-up. It's a weekly wellness check.

Seven individuals had passed away since coming on the list. Two had gone to nursing homes. Some numbers had been disconnected, leaving me to wonder what had become of them.

None of you could have had the conversations I did and then not want to support funding for these individuals. The stories are heartbreaking. These folks desperately want to stay in their homes. The services provided by the AAAs are intended to be preventative.

This isn't a list where names get added and forgotten. These are real people I've spoken with and many continue to call me because they're scared they'll be overlooked. I reassure them they have not been forgotten and that they remain on the waitlist. I remember those conversations. And sometimes I later see one of their names in the obituaries, and I'm deeply saddened.

I implore you to think of your own vulnerable loved ones. Please support funding for the critical services provided by our AAAs and end the wait.