



**Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Energy, Utilities and Technology**

**In Favor of LD 2067 – An Act to Make Permanent
the Arrearage Management Program for Low-
income Residential Electricity Customers**

Submitted on February 1, 2024

Greetings, Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and the members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.

My name is Jess Maurer and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am also a current member of the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council. I am testifying in favor of LD 2067.

There are likely few things as stressful as late or missed payments – particularly when the payment is for a critical service that meets a basic need, like electricity. For lower-income older Mainers who are on fixed incomes, incomes that are often insufficient to meet even basic needs, on a monthly basis, they must decide whether to buy groceries, heat their homes, pay for their medications, or pay the electric, phone or tax bill. If they have an unexpected home repair or car repair, this can throw their entire budget off, making it nearly impossible for them to meet their financial obligations. These are huge stresses for folks who are constantly balancing life on the edge because they simply do not have enough income.

Arrearage management programs are lifelines for Mainers who are challenged by these circumstances. They provide peace of mind and meet people where they are by allowing them to make smaller payments while working to bring their account current. Maine's existing program should not be repealed and should become permanent.

This is an equity issue. As outlined in the 2022 report on the Economic Status of Older Women in Maine,¹ many older women who find themselves living at or near poverty experienced a lifetime of economic disparities and injustices. Older women are more than two times more likely to live alone than older men, and are likely to have less income than men who live alone. More than half of all older women who live alone do not have enough income to meet their basic needs. More than two times the number of women over 80 live in poverty than men over 80.

Last year, this esteemed body took a huge unanimous, bi-partisan step forward in addressing the significant economic challenges older women in Maine are facing by increasing eligibility for

¹ Snow, Gattine and MacKinnon, Cutler Institute, Maine, 2022.

the Medicare Savings Program. LD 2067 while not as grand or broad in its scope plays an important role in ensuring older low-income people who fall behind in their electric bills have a reliable pathway to catch up before experiencing significant harm. Without these sorts of safety nets, older people can become unhoused, live unsafely, and experience early entry into long term care all because they have insufficient income to meet their basic needs.

I urge you to support LD 2067.

Thank you.

Jess Maurer, Esq.