



**Testimony of Marge Kilkelly on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Housing and Economic Development**

**In Favor of LD 1 - An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for
Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure**

Submitted February 11, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and the members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

My name is Marge Kilkelly, I am a Policy Consultant for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 135 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 testifying in favor of LD 1- *An Act to Increase Storm Preparedness for Maine's Communities, Homes and Infrastructure*

The storms of last winter were a vivid reminder of the power of seas and weather. While we work to recover from those events we know that we should expect more of them in the future. Planning and preparation are always the most efficient, cost effective way to address any issues.

MCOA supports the establishment of the State Resilience Office to assist in cross sector technical support and funding; however, we do believe that on the ground service providers such as Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Community Action Programs (CAPs), food banks, and others should be included in the planning and be eligible for funding. These service providers are often in daily direct contact with residents and we believe are essential for a successful program that reduces duplication and creates efficiencies.

The 2020 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act requires that states and AAAs develop plans for disaster preparedness and response specifically focused on the needs of older adults and coordination with other services.

Components of the plan include:

- **Focus on vulnerable population:** The OAA recognizes that older adults are particularly vulnerable during emergencies and aims to ensure their needs are addressed in disaster response plans.
- **Coordination with other agencies:** Effective OAA emergency planning requires collaboration with public health agencies, first responders, and other community organizations.
- **Considerations for older adults:** Emergency plans should include specific considerations for older adults, such as access to assistive devices, transportation needs, medication management, and communication methods for those with hearing or vision impairments.
- **Identifying high-risk older adults:** Identifying older adults who might require additional support during an emergency, such as those living alone, with chronic health conditions, or limited mobility.
- **Developing communication strategies:** Creating clear and accessible communication channels to reach older adults with timely information about emergencies.
- **Evacuation plans:** Establishing safe evacuation routes and procedures with designated transportation options for older adults.
- **Shelter arrangements:** Coordinating with shelters to ensure they can accommodate the needs of older adults, including providing appropriate medical supplies and accessible accommodations.
- **Caregiver support:** Planning for the needs of caregivers who may need assistance in supporting older adults during an emergency.

We urge your support of LD1 with the inclusion of service providers to assure that the needs of all Mainers are addressed in this effort.

Thank you for your consideration.