

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

Date: March 23, 2021
To: Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
From: Anna Broome, Legislative Analyst

LD 485 An Act To Continue Funding for Home-delivered Meals for Homebound Seniors and To Address Growing Demand

SUMMARY: This bill provides ongoing funding to provide home-delivered meals to homebound seniors and to leverage all federal funds available. Meals on Wheels serves those who are 60+ years old, are homebound and unable to leave their house without assistance, unable to prepare a meal and have no one available to prepare a meal (and spouses); can also serve <60 with disability if living with an older individual.

ISSUES FROM TESTIMONY:

- DHHS: Maine receives \$2.4m in FF annually for home delivered meals through the OAA. Additional \$1.4m in other federal and state funds allocated each year for the program. Last biennial budget included one-time GF of \$750,000 in each year of the biennium. Federal covid-related bills and CRF combined to provide additional funding. Number of home delivered meals tripled from 35,000 per month to 102,000 per month now. Expecting an extension of funding from Sept 2021 to Sept 2022.
- MCOA and AAAs: nearly 2/3 of the new meals on wheels recipients are eligible in the future and stigma reduced. Concern about returning to waitlists (existed and growing prior to pandemic) with end of federal funds and one-time funding ending. Additional benefits related to reductions in isolation and loneliness.

DRAFTING ISSUES:

- Account number in the bill should be changed (see OFPR preliminary fiscal impact statement)
- Unclear that “leverage all federal funds available” is necessary (although there is match required).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED BY COMMITTEE:

- Donation amounts. From Jess Maurer at MCOA: Average donation across the five AAAs is 44c per meal. Total donations received for October 2019 to September 2020 year from meals on wheels recipients was \$438,031.
- Jess Maurer and Gerry Queally: State match doesn't draw down federal funds but match is required at 15% for OAA; match is closer to 18.6% for nutrition. Match can be in dollars or value of volunteer hours.
- Requested from DHHS:
 - Is Maine drawing down the maximum amount of federal funding for meals on wheels allowed under the Older Americans Act?
 - How much funding does Maine have to provide to draw down the federal funding for meals on wheels?
 - The testimony indicated that the ACL has indicated that an extension beyond September 30, 2021 might occur – would this allow for additional funding or an extension to the funding already received or allocated? If the latter, how much funding would still be available?
 - What was the expansion in federal eligibility guidelines during the pandemic? Who is currently eligible that would no longer be eligible when the pandemic is over or the funding depleted?

FISCAL IMPACT:

OFPR preliminary fiscal impact statement: the bill includes GF appropriations to DHHS of \$1.5m beginning in FY21-22 to provide meals to homebound individuals. The department suggests the program receiving the appropriation should be 0420 – Long Term Care – Office of Aging and Disability Services, instead of 0140 – OADS Central Office.