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**Introducing LD 485, “An Act To Continue Funding for Home-delivered Meals for Homebound Seniors and To Address Growing Demand”**  
**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**March 17, 2021.**

Good afternoon, Chair Meyer, and respected members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Ned Claxton, and I represent the people of Senate District 20, including the towns of Auburn, Minot, Mechanic Falls, Poland and New Gloucester.

By providing an annual appropriation of \$1,500,000, LD 485 recognizes, continues and expands support for the work and contribution of our 5 Maine Area Agencies on Aging. Through their Meals on Wheels program, the agencies have fed thousands more older Mainers during the Covid pandemic than usual. In a typical year, there are already too many older Mainers who are food insecure. In those times, Meals on Wheels typically has a waiting list for their service.

In the past year, the numbers of those who qualify for this service has increased at least 50%. And the AAA’s stepped up to feed their communities. They reorganized their food production, they found new and younger volunteers, they more closely partnered with food banks and they provided thousands more meals at a time when many were struggling to get enough to eat. We knew there was food insecurity in Maine. The pandemic has further exposed its breadth. My AAA (SeniorsPlus in Lewiston) ended up serving almost twice as many people as it usually would. They all qualified for the service. They all received up to 7 meals a week.

In addition to the direct benefits of feeding hungry people, this program, with the many associated supports that the Agencies provide, helps stabilize the health of its recipients and helps keep some of our most vulnerable people out of nursing homes and hospitals. In addition to supplying prepared meals, the Agencies usually also provide a wellness check on recipients and an opportunity to socialize. Much of that work has been done virtually in the last year, but the work of getting the meals to people continues. These are crucial lifelines for some of our seniors and can help prevent the need for more expensive services.

Temporary funding and increased donations have helped the Agencies address the needs in the past year, but those funds will eventually decrease or disappear. The need will not. For that reason, I ask you to support LD 485 and the impressive and crucial work of the Area Agencies on Aging.

Thank you for your attention, and I would be happy to try and answer any questions.