

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



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March 17, 2021

Senator Claxton, Co-Chair
Representative Meyer, Co-Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

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

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information regarding LD 485, *An Act To Continue Funding for Home-delivered Meals for Homebound Seniors and To Address Growing Demand*. The Department is neither for nor against this bill.

Maine receives approximately \$2.4 million in federal funding annually for home delivered meals through the Older Americans Act. An additional \$1.4 million in other federal and state funds are also allocated each year to support this program. In the current biennium, this funding was supplemented by a one-time State General Fund appropriation of \$1.5 million (\$750,000 annually). We believe the intent of this bill is to prevent a decrease in home delivered meals from occurring when the State General Fund appropriation expires on June 30 of this year, and to provide ongoing funds for growing demand.

Federal relief funds have provided a significant increase in Maine's allotment for home delivered meals. The CARES Act, Families First Coronavirus Response Act and Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 combined provided nearly \$4.5 million in supplemental meal money to the State. In addition, in December of 2020, Governor Mills approved \$536,000 from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to support the continued provision of home delivered meals. This additional funding, along with an expansion of federal eligibility guidelines during the pandemic, has resulted in a tripling of home delivered meals in Maine, from 35,000 meals per month before the pandemic, to over 102,000 meals per month now.

The federal government has allowed considerable flexibility in the extra funding by allowing extensions to normal expenditure periods. The normal end date for CARES Act and Families First Act funding is September 30, 2021, but the Administration for Community Living has indicated that extensions may be submitted this spring. Funds from the Consolidated Appropriations Act may be expended through September 30, 2022. The Department is working with the Area Agencies on Aging to provide as much flexibility as possible under federal rules to make the transition back to normal funding levels as smooth as possible. We do not anticipate

any abrupt reductions in service through this calendar year. Should Congress enact an additional stimulus bill, we anticipate that it will include another significant allocation for supplemental home delivered meals.

It is important to note that federal eligibility and funding for home delivered meals are expected to decrease as special pandemic funding ends. Current pandemic funding runs through September 30, 2022.

We would be pleased to provide additional information for the work session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Saucier".

Paul Saucier, Director
Office of Aging and Disability Services