



**Testimony of Dyan Walsh, Executive Director, Eastern Area Agency on Aging  
in support of An Act To Continue Funding for Home-delivered Meals for Homebound Seniors and To  
Address Growing Demand (LD 485)**

March 17, 2021

Before the Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services: Eastern Area Agency on Aging (EAAA) expresses its strong support of An Act to Continue Funding for Home-delivered Meals for Homebound Seniors and To Address Growing Demand (LD 485). At EAAA, our mission is to provide older adults, caregivers and adults with disabilities in Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Washington counties in Maine with the information and access to resources they need to be healthy, engaged and supported in their communities.

EAAA has served Penobscot, Piscataquis, Hancock, and Washington counties since 1973 and provides direct services and resource and referral coordination to more than 11,000 individuals each year across our 13,000 square mile territory. Since March of 2020 through February of 2021, EAAA served over 220,000 meals to 1,682 homebound individuals through the Meals on Wheels program. As the Executive Director of an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in rural Maine, I want to stress the need has never been greater for those individuals living with food insecurity.

The funds provided by the Legislature in 2019 to help with the Meals on Wheels waitlist have allowed us to serve an additional 300+ homebound older adults. Over the past year the pandemic has only highlighted the need for food. The Administration for Community Living changed the eligibility criteria in 2020 for Meals on Wheels to include those individuals who are practicing social distancing due to the emergency. This change in criteria meant that over the past 12 months EAAA served three times the number of older adults than in the 12 months prior.

These individuals will still be eligible for Meals on Wheels even after the criterion reverts back and the appropriation in LD 485 is crucial to provide ongoing nutritional support.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the many members of the legislature who started volunteering with AAA's around the state when the pandemic started last year.

I ask for the Committee on Health and Human Services to support LD 485 with a unanimous ought to pass vote.

Thank you.