

Date: March 15, 2021

To: Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Megan M. Walton, CEO of Southern Maine Agency on Aging and a resident of Falmouth

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

Senator Claxton, Rep. Meyer, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support LD 485 in response to the growing demand for Meals on Wheels in the state of Maine. As my Area Agency on Aging colleagues have shared with you, the demand has risen dramatically for our Meals on Wheels program, and that demand is not going away (please see page two, attached). I want to also offer some additional reasons why your support of LD 485 is so critical:

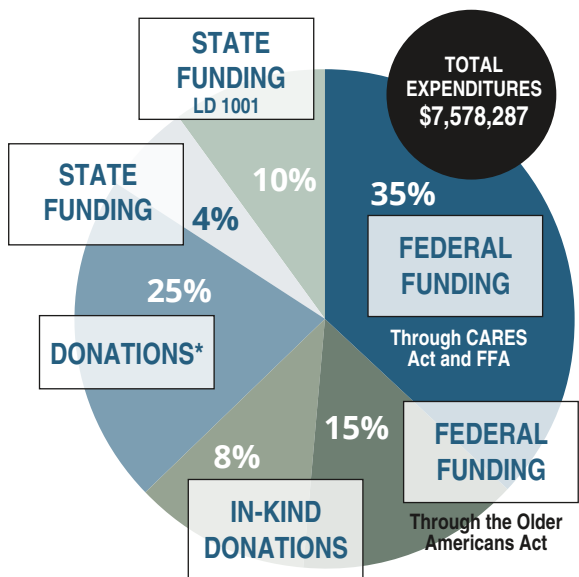
- 1. The Area Agencies on Aging's Meals on Wheels program is a COMMUNITY effort.** As demonstrated in the attached, Meals on Wheels is a community-supported effort from foundations, municipalities, volunteers, corporations, and individual donors. Funding from the State of Maine would allow the Area Agencies on Aging to continue to meet the needs of our older adult population and demonstrate the State's commitment to continuing to make this a community-wide effort.
- 2. The Area Agencies on Aging's Meals on Wheels program helps us access and assist and take care of some of Maine's most vulnerable older adults.** The recent vaccination assistance effort that the Area Agencies on Aging have taken on – to ensure that older adults living in rural areas, low-income older adults, and low-income minority individuals get vaccinated – is again just another reason why the Meals on Wheels program is essential. Through the Meals On Wheels program and our connections to so many older adults in our region, we have all been able to help members of our community get vaccinated who would not otherwise receive it. We have been able to share useful resources and information about how to access the vaccine that they may have otherwise not had access to. We have also been able to identify the most vulnerable in our communities that will need the vaccine but are unable to leave their homes to receive it. This program is a "first responder," as demonstrated through the pandemic.
- 3. The Meals on Wheels program is a key way that we can keep older adults out of the ER and prevent hospitalizations.** Southern Maine Agency on Aging was part of a study with Maine Medical Center for high-risk Medicare patients. The study demonstrated the hospital readmission costs that were avoided thanks to the meals that were delivered to patients who were discharged. Having another set of eyes on a community member or patient is critical to delivering the continuum of care for our residents.

Thank you for your time and attention towards older Mainers. Please see attached for a copy of the Statewide infographic for your information.



Meals On Wheels

Vital to Older Adults in Maine



*Corporate, individual, foundations, and municipal donations

The hybrid funding for Meals-On-Wheels makes it a successful public-private partnership. State funding **MUST** be increased so that the Area Agencies on Aging can continue to meet the hunger demand and take care of older Mainers.

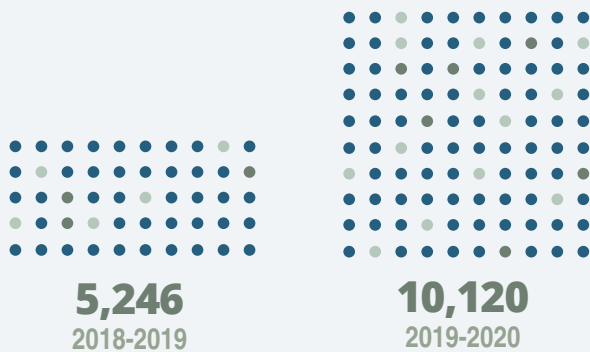
The Area Agencies on Aging have collectively supported thousands of older adults over the past year by delivering nutritious meals and safety checks.

- Maine’s older adult population is growing at a rapid pace.
- Older adults living at or below poverty are twice as likely to have to live in expensive long-term care facilities or rely on caregivers.
- The Meals on Wheels program prevents hospitalizations, improves safety, and combats social isolation for older adults.

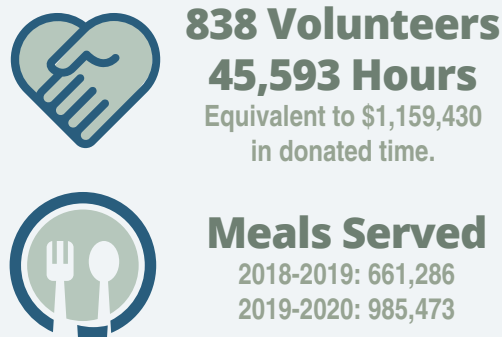


The pandemic has doubled the demand for the Meals on Wheels program... and the demand is not going away.

Older Adults Served



2019-2020 Numbers



Maine Older Adults Quick Facts



- Older adult Population: 369,485 (28%)
- Older adults living alone: 92,716 (25%)
- Older adults living in poverty: 32,887 (9%)
- Older adults threatened by hunger: 57,270 (16%)

