



CITY OF PORTLAND

To: Committee on Health and Human Services
From: Linda Weare, Director of Elder Affairs
Date: March 17, 2021
RE: Testimony in support of LD 727 (*Resolve, To Ensure the Health and Wellness of Older Residents of the State*)

Good afternoon, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

The City of Portland fully supports LD 727, which requests that the Department of Health and Human Services asks the United States Department of Agriculture to waive the assets test for determining the eligibility for the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program of any household in which there is an individual who is 60 years of age or older. It also directs the department to develop a pilot project to provide home-delivered meals to individuals who are 60 years of age or older and who are homebound or at risk for readmission to a health care facility.

Benefits to such a change would be significant. First, waiving the asset test for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for households that include a person over the age of 60 would allow older people to save for their future financial and care needs while living on a low fixed income in retirement. According to the Social Security Administration, the average annual income of older Mainers living on Social Security alone is around \$17,000. Assets aside, these individuals would be eligible to receive this benefit and be better able to remain healthy through good nutrition. Additionally, waiving the asset test for these households will reduce the likelihood of a family member not wanting to take an older relative into their home for fear they will lose SNAP benefits themselves.

Regarding the second provision, it has been determined through smaller, grant-funded pilot projects in Maine and in other states that providing nutritious, home-delivered meals to older people transitioning from hospital to home helps support health and is effective in reducing costly readmissions to hospitals and nursing homes. In spite of the proven effectiveness of such interventions, consistent funding has not been provided to support these programs. We believe that a pilot project like the one recommended in LD 727 could demonstrate the benefits of extending nutritional support at home in terms of improved health outcomes and extended independence for recipients. The end report is also likely to show cost savings to the Mainecare program in the long-term.

In summary, I ask that you vote in support of LD 727. Thank you for your time and consideration.