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April 1, 2021

## **Testimony in Support of LD 1064 – An Act to Advance Palliative Care Utilization in the State**

Greetings Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Lori Parham and I am the State Director for AARP Maine. AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our more than 200,000 members statewide, I thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on the critical issue of palliative care access in Maine.

I am sharing testimony today in support of LD 1064.

There are many barriers preventing Mainers from accessing palliative care including the cost of care and a lack of information regarding care options. Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. It is provided by a specially trained team of doctors, nurses, social workers, and other specialists who work together with the individual's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. It focuses on providing people with relief from the symptoms and stresses of a serious illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family, including family caregivers.<sup>1</sup>

This care can be provided in a number of settings including in a hospital, long-term care facility, or a person's home. Palliative care teams focus on providing care with a "whole person" approach to improve a patient's quality of life in areas such as:

- Pain and symptom management
- Emotional and psychological well being
- Practical and logistical support <sup>2</sup>

For care recipients, palliative care, can mean being able to receive care in the setting of their choosing, easing stress, honoring their wishes and values for care, and reducing symptoms of illness. Research suggests that palliative care can prolong a patient's life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *What is Palliative Care?*. October, 2016. AARP.org

<sup>2</sup> *What Caregivers Should Know About Palliative Care*. December 2019. AARP.org

<sup>3</sup> English, Jeannine. *Palliative Care: A Key to Living With Dignity*. December, 2015. AARP.org

Other studies have shown that with better management of pain and other symptoms, hospital admission and readmission is decreased.<sup>4</sup>

Access to palliative care also supports family caregivers. In Maine there are an estimated 181,000 family caregivers who provide unpaid care, valued at 2.2 billion dollars, every year. LD 1064 will provide some relief to caregivers who are caring for a loved one at home by adding another layer of support and preventing caregiver burnout.

LD 1064 will reduce some barriers to palliative care services allowing recipients to have a better quality of life. We respectfully ask for your support of LD 1064.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [lparham@aarpp.org](mailto:lparham@aarpp.org) or (207) 400-1026.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lori Parham  
AARP Maine

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<sup>4</sup> Donlon, Rachel, Purington, Kitty and Williams, Natalie. *Advancing Palliative Care for Adults with Serious Illness: A National Review of State Palliative Care Policies and Programs*. National Academy for State Health Policy. December 2018.