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Testimony of Leo J. Delicata, Esq., Legal Services for the Elderly, in support of LD 1624, Resolve, To Create a Stakeholder Group To Identify the Needs of Long-term Care Family Caregivers, before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

As part of its responsibility and with the assistance of an advisory group including Maine Aging Network¹ members and other knowledgeable community organizations, the Office of Aging and Disability Services as Maine's State Unit on Aging (SUA) produced the 2020-2024 State Plan on Aging.²

The goal of the State Plan is: "...to assist older adults and their care partners to maintain their independence and to live where they choose safely." Three objectives will help us reach that goal. First, "Support older Mainers and their care partners to remain active and healthy in their communities of choice. Second, "Enhance the quality of programs through data standardization, program evaluation, and outcome measurement." Third, "Prevent and improve response to abuse, neglect, and exploitation while preserving the rights and autonomy of older Mainers." ³

Explaining more about the strategy that will be used to achieve the first objective the State Plan says: "Maine's SUA will lead the efforts to support older adults and their care partners to remain in their communities through the provision of home and community-based services, service navigation, enhanced volunteer utilization, elder justice services, and caregiver support. Providing home supports will help

¹ Maine's Aging Network is comprised of four major components: The Office of Aging and Disability Services, five Area Agencies on Aging, Maine Legal Services for the Elderly, the Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and community service Providers. The Office of Aging and Disability Services is the designated State Unit on Aging (SUA) under Title 3B of the Older American's Act.

² https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Maine_State%20Plan%20on%20Aging_2020-2024.pdf

³ State Plan, page 2

reduce the need for institutional care in any form. These choices support the independence and the finances of both the individual and the public as costs for community-based services are comparatively lower than institutional care.”⁴

The bill before you directly addresses that objective. It tasks a knowledgeable group of stakeholder with the mission to produce a plan that will lead the way to better assessing the complex dynamic that exists between family caregivers and the older adults that they support. This type of data driven assessment will help to more exactly identify the caregiver needs that now exist but go un-noticed and unmet. The importance of gaining the ability to identify emerging needs and predicting with some degree of certainty what will happen if those needs are not met cannot be overemphasized. It will foster more intelligent decisions about what help to offer caregivers; encourage the success of caregiving relationships and will ultimately result in keeping vulnerable people safe and in their homes.

We believe that this approach has great promise for improving many programs for older adults. Legal Services for the Elderly has already taken some small steps in using a more data driven process in our practice. We now use a more focused interview technique in particular cases based on our examination of the data behind our exploitation matters. In short, we believe that there are some basic factors common to older individuals who have been victims of financial exploitation. When we become aware that a new client has those factors in their life we make sure that we ask questions that will allow us to properly assess their risk of exploitation and advise our client accordingly. We think this will reduce the incidence of financial exploitation in that population of clients.

We are looking forward to participating in this work group if you vote this Resolution ought to pass. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts with you today.

⁴ State Plan, Page 2