



**Written Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
The Maine Council on Aging
To Joint Standing Committee on
Health and Human Services**

Testimony in Support of LD 1624

Delivered in Writing on May 3, 2021

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

My name is Jess Maurer. I'm the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of more than 100 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older Mainers working to make sure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age in our homes and communities. I am testifying in favor of LD 1624, a Resolve to Create a Stakeholder Group to Identify the Needs of Long-term Care Family Caregivers.

There are an estimated 180,000 informal family caregivers in Maine. These are spouses, children, grandchildren and other relatives caring for aging and disabled adults who have difficulty living independently. Many of these caregivers are caring for the more than 37,000 people in Maine who are living with some form of dementia.

Informal family caregivers are quite literally the backbone of the long-term care system – without them, our system of caring for aging and disabled adults would fall apart. Without them, it's estimated that Maine would have to spend \$2.2 billion annually to provide the same level of care. Informal family caregivers spend hundreds of hours every year providing uncompensated direct care to their loved ones. This can be 24/7 hand's-on care with complete assistance with all activities of daily living, or periodic care, including grocery shopping, cleaning, transportation to and from medical appointments, daily check-ins, and help with medications.

This resolve establishes a stakeholder group to consider the needs of family caregivers providing long term care support. The group must make recommendations for the implementation of an assessment of their needs and establish a plan to improve referrals to services. Approximately 30 states in the country have implemented a similar family caregiver assessment and Maine should follow suit. We should be doing all that we can to support family caregivers, connect them to resources, and delay entry into facilities as appropriate.

A report released in September 2016 by the National Academies of Sciences said, “...***the need to recognize and support family caregivers is the most significantly overlooked challenge facing the United States society.***”¹ Nearly all of the data contained in this testimony is attributable to this report and I urge Committee members to read it fully. LD 1624 takes a step in the right direction by recognizing that we must understand what caregivers need before we can act to meet those needs.

We urge you to support LD 1624.

Jess Maurer
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¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2016. *Families caring for an aging America*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2016/families-caring-for-an-aging-america.aspx>