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May 20, 2021

Testimony in favor of LD 296: An Act to Create the Family Caregiver Grant Pilot Program

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

My name is Bridget Quinn and I am the Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine. On behalf of our more than 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today.

AARP Maine is supporting LD 296, a modest grant program that will help to bring some financial relief to Maine's family caregivers. Family caregivers often incur high out of pocket expenses to help loved ones remain safely at home.

State data available in the 2019 updated report of AARP's Valuing the Invaluable series, shows that in Maine approximately 181,000 family caregivers provide care worth 2.2 billion dollars annually to loved ones.¹ These caregivers are the backbone of our care system.

Family caregivers provide their time and energy to help seniors live independently at home and many also pay out of pocket expenses related to caregiving. Most family caregivers, 78% nationwide, paid expenses to support their loved ones. Paying for things such as home modifications, assistive equipment, home care aides, respite care, and more.² According to the 2016 AARP report, Family Caregiving and Out-of-Pocket Costs, family caregivers, on average, are spending \$7,000 per year (\$6,954) on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving.³

¹ Reinhard, Susan C. Lynn Friss Feinberg, Ari Houser, Rita Choula, and Molly Evans. Valuing the Invaluable: 2019 Update – Charting a Path Forward. Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute. November 2019. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00082.001>

² Rainville, Chuck, Laura Skufca, and Laura Mehegan. Family Caregiving and Out-of-Pocket Costs: 2016 Report. Washington, DC: AARP Research, November 2016. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00138.001>.

³ Rainville, Chuck, Laura Skufca, and Laura Mehegan. Family Caregiving and Out-of-Pocket Costs: 2016 Report. Washington, DC: AARP Research, November 2016. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00138.001>.

Family caregivers often put their own health, career and retirement at risk. They're taking on financial challenges on top of physical and emotional challenges—helping older loved ones with bathing, meal preparation, medical tasks, transportation and more. LD 296 will provide us the opportunity to support Mainers who are already giving so much to their loved ones and the state.

Not only is LD 296 an opportunity to support Mainers who need it most, it also makes fiscal sense. Family caregivers are the first line of defense against older Mainers being forced from their homes and into costly nursing homes. Allowing loved ones to remain in their homes, where they want to be, saves Maine—and taxpayers—money since nursing home care is mostly paid for by the state, through Medicaid.

With LD 296 we can support family caregivers so they can safely care for their older loved ones at home—keeping them out of nursing homes, and preventing unnecessary and costly hospitalizations.

I respectfully ask you to support LD 296. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. If you have any questions or need further information, please don't hesitate to contact me at bquinn@aarpp.org or 207-272-8563.

Thank you,
Bridget Quinn
AARP Maine

