

INCREASE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR OLDER MAINERS!

Fund LD 1684, An Act to Invest in the Health and Wellness of Older Maine Residents by Expanding Coordinated Community Programming

Despite having the oldest population in the nation, Maine does not have the programming necessary to provide much needed case management services to older adults. *In fact, older Mainers are one of the few remaining populations in the state who would benefit from targeted case management services but for whom they are not adequately available.* Meanwhile, the needs of our older neighbors continue to increase and evolve, leaving too many facing food insecurity and homelessness. **Funding LD 1684 would go a long way in addressing these unmet needs.**



Maine's Area Agencies on Aging

- Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are the state's central resource for older adults. They bring meals, provide family caregiver support, offer expert advice on insurance and drug benefits, deliver classes to help folks age well, and direct aging Mainers to critical community resources.
- These services help to prevent Mainers from seeking higher-cost healthcare services such as ER visits, prolonged hospital stays, or institutional care. AAAs help individuals remain securely housed and active participants in their communities at a fraction of the cost of nursing home or institutional care alternatives.
- **BUT current funding for Maine's AAAs only allows them to provide case management services to an incredibly small portion of the state's 400,000+ older adults — many of whom desperately need support!**
 - 1 in every 4 older adults lives alone,
 - 1 in every 6 Mainers are threatened by food insecurity and,
 - In 2020, older adults 65+ represented the fastest growing homeless population nationally.

How does LD 1684 help?

- The initial block funding amount of \$2.5 million allocated in LD 1684 will distribute \$500,000 per AAA for development of the infrastructure and programming necessary to provide critical and urgent case management services to older adults across Maine.
- A secondary block of funding in the amount of \$2.5 million will provide each of Maine's AAAs the ability to continue the ongoing case management services and supports for those in need.

This is the kind of work where our Area Agencies on Aging really shine. Our AAAs know and are already practicing - to overwhelmingly positive outcomes - how to mitigate these challenges upstream and keep Maine's growing older adult population living safely and securely at home. Maine's Area Agencies on Aging have all the passion and knowledge necessary to implement these vital services – **it is past time they were adequately equipped to do so.**

Please prioritize funding for and support LD 1684's inclusion in the Supplemental Budget!



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Don't these types of services already exist?

- **No, not for older adults.** Current information and referral phone line services, which the AAAs provide already, lack the ability to fully assess a person's scope of need to adequately wrap the necessary supports around them. Case management services would provide that ability.

Why do we need targeted case management services for older adults?

- Older Mainers are suffering the consequences of not having a targeted case management system in place.
 - In 2022, Maine courts saw a **27% increase in the number of housing eviction filings, of which older Mainers represent more than a third** of those cases.
- AAAs across Maine are seeing increases in requests for assistance regarding housing and rent assistance, home delivered meals, and family caregiver support, as well as increases in cases of persons living with Alzheimer's and mental health challenges due to extreme social isolation, anxiety, and stress.
 - In the Southern region alone, **Southern Maine Agency on Aging reported a 275% increase over the past year in the number of older adults seeking help with housing-related issues**, with calls to the Information & Referral phone line related to eviction, rental and tax assistance, and homelessness.
 - In the Eastern Maine region, **Eastern Area Agency on Aging, with the largest coverage area in our state, saw a 212% increase in calls over the past year in the number of older adults seeking help with housing-related issues** to the Information and Referral phone line related to eviction, rental and tax assistance, and homelessness.
- In the fall of 2023, each Maine AAA conducted listening sessions with **hundreds of older adults** across the state - one of the biggest concerns raised by our constituents and their caregivers is navigating the web of resources that they know exist but cannot access because of the complexity of the system.
- Our AAAs serve Mainers in both urban and rural areas, however, the challenges associated with providing services in rural areas are profound. The funding in LD 1684 will allow the AAAs the ability to hire staff and develop infrastructure to overcome barriers associated with rural service delivery.

How do we know expanding these services will work?

- Maine's AAAs have already piloted these services with remarkable success through the MaineHealth Alzheimer's Disease Initiative Partnership. The pilot found that providing complex case management to individuals living alone helped address social determinants of health and reduce the number of people at risk in essential areas of need. **Improvements were noted after ninety days of service**, and even greater improvements were reported over a longer period of service delivery.

Casework in Action - Clayton's Story

After his wife passed away, Clayton, who is blind, began to struggle with feelings of isolation. He set a goal of moving out of his current apartment and finding a housing environment where he'd be surrounded by other people his age, as well as more resources and support. By working with a Resource Specialist at Southern Maine Agency on Aging, he was able to navigate systems and apply to several housing options. He happily moved into a housing community for older adults in September 2023.