



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Maine's Area Agencies on Aging call on legislature to fund targeted case management services for older adults

**AUGUSTA, Maine** (February 12, 2024) – Despite having the oldest population in the nation, Maine does not have the necessary infrastructure to provide much-needed targeted case management services to older adults. Older Mainers continue to face challenges in accessing healthcare, affordable housing, and the services that keep them safely at home and in their communities, putting them at risk of unnecessary hospitalizations, homelessness, and food insecurity. Last legislative session, thanks to the advocacy of Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and the Maine Council on Aging, the Health and Human Services Committee unanimously voted in favor of LD 1684 which would go a long way in addressing these unmet needs. Though the bill has bipartisan support, it still has not been funded.

“Older Mainers are suffering the consequences of not having a targeted case management system in place, and too many are falling through the cracks,” says Jena Jones, Policy and Advocacy Director at Maine Council on Aging. “In 2022, they represented more than a third of the state’s rising housing eviction filings, and in our day-to-day work, we also see that they’re experiencing increasing rates of food insecurity and social isolation. The funding in LD 1684 would build the AAAs’ case management capacity, allowing us to fully assess a person’s scope of need and adequately wrap the necessary supports around them.”

All of the state’s Agencies on Aging, from Southern Maine to Aroostook, 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 people living with Alzheimer’s and mental health challenges due to extreme social isolation, anxiety, and stress. Current funding only allows these agencies to provide services to a fraction of the people in need.

“In our region alone, which encompasses York and Cumberland Counties, we saw a 275% increase last year in the number of older adults seeking help with housing-related issues,” says Megan Walton, CEO of Southern Maine Agency on Aging and President of M4A, the Maine Association of Agencies on Aging. “These services are urgently needed, and our older neighbors can’t afford to wait for help.”

The AAAs have called on the Governor's Office and the legislature's Appropriations and Finance Committee to ensure funding for LD 1684 is included in the state's supplemental budget.

***About Maine's Agencies on Aging***

*Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging (Aroostook Agency on Aging, Eastern Area Agency on Aging, SeniorsPlus, Southern Maine Agency on Aging, and Spectrum Generations) are the state's central resource for older adults. They provide meals, family caregiver support, expert advice on insurance and drug benefits, classes to help folks age well, and information on critical community resources. These services help 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.*

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