

Fact Sheet on Legislative Bills Important to Spectrum Generations and the People We Serve

LR/LD	Description/Title	Spectrum Generations' Perspective
Governor's Budget	Proposed Cuts to the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) and the Drugs for the Elderly Program (DEL)	<p>We have strong reservations about this portion of the Governor's budget because the change in MSP/DEL eligibility will eliminate all benefits for 14,000 people currently receiving them and significantly reduce the benefit for 21,000 more. Nearly 2,000 will lose all benefits under the DEL program. Most of the older adults losing these benefits are on fixed incomes but will have to now pay thousands of dollars out of pocket for health care and drugs. More than a quarter of Maine seniors live on only Social Security, with an average income of under \$14,000. Unfortunately, if this change in eligibility is enacted, any older Mainer who receives MSP or DEL who earns more than \$12,700 will lose money out of their pockets and anyone earning more than \$16,800 will lose all benefits entirely. <u>Changing the eligibility criteria for MSP and DEL will increase the suffering of thousands of low-income Maine seniors and be disastrous for our economy because many of these seniors will stop taking life-saving medication, meaning increased costs for emergency services, hospitalization and long term care.</u></p>
LD 886 LD 1350	<p>Increase Reimbursement for Direct Care Workers</p> <p>An Act To Increase the Reimbursement Rate for Direct Care Workers Serving Maine's Seniors</p>	<p>There is a critical shortage of direct care Personal Support Service (PSS) workers. As MaineCare reimbursement rates have remained at 2004 funding levels (\$15/hour), these important workers have been unable to earn a livable wage. Maine seniors are not receiving the help they need to stay at home, requiring costlier healthcare interventions or admissions to more expensive skilled nursing facilities.</p> <p>We strongly support the need to increase the reimbursement rate so PSS workers can earn a livable wage. However, we do have concerns about the language in LD 1350 requiring 85% of any rate increase be mandated to worker wages and benefits; such a mandate will adversely affect a provider's ability to provide a quality service in future years as other direct costs and indirect costs increase. We feel the free market competition for quality worker recruitment and retention will ensure the vast majority of any rate increase goes toward the PSS worker.</p> <p>Additionally, we have concerns that a \$25/hour reimbursement rate may have the unintended consequence of making a PSS services unaffordable for non-MaineCare private pay individuals. A better rate in the \$20-\$22/hour range would serve best for both constituencies.</p>
LD 1337	An Act To Fully Fund the Family Caregiver Respite Program	<p>This bill is intended to eliminate the waiting list for the Family Caregiver Respite Program in 2015-16 and meet the growing demand for the program in 2016-17. There is a great need for expanded respite services. Many of Maine's older and</p>

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		disabled adults are being cared for, 24/7, by family members. This can, at times, be an overwhelming and stressful responsibility. Respite providers give the caregivers a much needed break so they can refuel and maintain their own health in order to continue caring for their loved one. Dedicated family caregivers would also benefit from supportive training when a loved one is transitioning from hospital to home. This would diminish the likelihood of a hospital re-admission.
LD 1095	An Act To Enhance the Property Tax Fairness Credit for Maine's Seniors and the Middle Class	90 percent of older adults want to age in their homes for as long as possible. Some elderly homeowners are choosing to cut basic needs (medication, quality food) in order to pay high property taxes. Amending the property tax fairness credit will make it more affordable for older adults to continue to live in their homes and thrive in place in the community.
LD 831	An Act To Reduce MaineCare Spending through Targeted Prevention Services	Making home delivered meals (Meals on Wheels) a covered service under MaineCare. These services are not available under MaineCare, but are allowable by CMS. Home delivered meals have been demonstrated to increase health and delay entry into facility-based care but they are not currently being used to promote health and community living. The Meals on Wheels infrastructure is already in place with volunteers providing shut-ins not only nutritious meals; but safety-checks, a social connection, and information on other programs through the AAA network. This home-based service is saving tax payers money and can save more as a MaineCare covered service by enabling older and disabled adults to safely stay in their homes, contributing to improved senior health, and alleviating the potential for emergency room visits and extended hospital stays.
LD 666	An Act To Allow a Patient To Designate a Caregiver in the Patient's Medical Record	Family caregivers play a critical role in care transitions, especially as their loved ones move from hospitals to rehabilitation centers and back home. Today, nearly 50 percent of family caregivers perform medical/nursing tasks, often with little or no explanation or guidance. Simple, yet profound changes can be made to support family caregivers so they can safely care for their loved ones at home and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations or re-hospitalizations following surgery or treatment. We think it is an excellent idea to have hospitals record the name of the patient's caregiver, inform the caregiver when the patient is being discharged from the hospital, and give the caregiver detailed instructions on how to best care for their loved one before discharge.

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LD 1205	An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Support the Independence of Maine's Seniors	This \$65M bond will provide energy efficient affordable homes to low-income Maine seniors. The bond will construct new homes or adaptively reuse existing structures to provide such homes. At least one facility will be located in each of Maine's 16 counties. Preference will be given to home locations that are accessible to health care, other essential goods and services, and public transportation. A portion of the bond proceeds will provide for home repair and weatherization of the existing homes of low-income seniors. These improvements will allow those seniors to safely remain in energy efficient affordable homes. The bond proceeds will leverage an estimated \$100 million in investment from private and other funds.
LD 1302	An Act To Increase Competition and Ensure a Robust Information and Telecommunications Market	Our concern is that if LD 1302 is enacted, it will eliminate the obligation of telephone companies to provide the affordable landline telephone service and access to the telephone network that for years has provided protection for Maine older citizens who would not be able to afford telephone service.
LD 844	An Act To Improve Transit Services Statewide	A transportation act, that includes an Advisory Council, is a key component to aging in place and access to services – especially for our older citizens.
LD 909	An Act To Help Older Adults Age in Place through Comprehensive Planning	We think it is critical that towns start thinking about aging in place when they're looking at accessory apartments, green spaces, walkability, location of bus routes and business districts, and affordable housing, this legislation will be helpful. While a handful of Maine's 500+ towns are engaged in this work pro-actively, most towns are not. Encouraging municipalities to develop policies that assist older adults with aging in place and that create age-friendly communities by amending the law governing comprehensive plans is smart and forward thinking.
LD 960	An Act to Protect Family Caregivers in the Workforce	Maine is very dependent on family caregivers for the community based caring of its older and disabled population. Adding "grandparent" and "great-grandparent" to the list of persons for whom a family medical leave is eligible to be taken for and providing that family medical leave may be taken in connection with the serious health condition experienced by any of these listed individuals related to the employee by blood, adoption, legal custody, marriage or domestic partnership will give employees the needed flexibility to meet their family obligations, enable persons to live longer in the community and reduce healthcare costs.
LD 365	An Act to Provide an Income Tax Credit for Modifications to Make a Home More Accessible for the Elderly and Persons with a Disability	Home repair and weatherization programs are vital to keeping elderly homeowners in place. We view a state income tax credit to mitigate the expense of modifications to make a home accessible for a person who is elderly or living with a disabling health condition, or their caregiver, and is intended to improve and

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		promote independent living and avoid falls and accidents as a positive outcome for Maine's older and disabled adults.
LD 1348	An Act To Protect Older Adults from Financial Exploitation	This Act establishes that money management services are core social services that should be available to older adults who can no longer manage certain aspects of their finances. It establishes funding for the Money Minders Program and requires Maine's Area Agencies on Aging to provide personal financial assistance to older adults through this, or similar programs. Funding for this program is a listed as a <i>State Plan on Aging</i> objective of DHHS' Office on Aging and Disability Services (OADS).
LD 249	An Act to Enable Seniors to Remain in their Homes	We strongly encourage the establishment of the Home Weatherization and Repair for Seniors Program and the Home Weatherization and Repair for Seniors Fund in the Department of Economic and Community Development to assist low-income seniors in remaining in their homes by replacing substandard fixtures and hardware and to reducing ongoing maintenance and heating costs, to low-income residents of the State.