



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

**In Favor of LD 325 -- "An Act To Provide Emergency Funds for Clients
of the Adult Protective Services System"**

Delivered in writing on February 27, 2019

Greetings Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jess Maurer and I'm the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of 75 organizations, businesses, and older Mainers working together to make sure we all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age in our homes and communities. I am providing testimony in favor of LD 325 as allocating emergency funds for clients of the Adult Protective Services System can drastically improve a client's circumstances.

We all value safety and security within our lives, our relationships, and our communities. Unfortunately, this is not always the reality for older Mainers who are too often the target of abuse and exploitation. In fact, the Department of Justice reports that 1 in 9 older adults will be the victim of elder abuse or exploitation each year. Older people are the targets of financial crimes because they often have access to resources, are often dependent on others for their care, may be isolated, and may be experiencing cognitive decline.

A just society protects vulnerable people from abuse and neglect and ensures they can gain access to the supports and services they need to remain free of harm. The unfortunate reality for older victims of abuse and neglect is a complete loss of assets and/or housing either because someone has stolen all of their resources or because they need to leave their home to be safe. Often times these older victims have financial needs that they cannot meet and that cannot be met through any other funding source.

The role of the Adult Protective System is to provide or arrange for services to protect incapacitated and/or dependent adults in dangerous situations. Many older clients find themselves in emergency situations with little to no financial resources. A necessary and effective way to help these clients is by creating an emergency fund. These funds could be used to cover emergency needs such as food, clothing, medicine, lodging, safety devices, transportation to a family member, repair/replacement of windows and doors due to a crime, and clean-up necessitated by a crime. Even the smallest expenses that are needed to be covered during an emergency can make the difference in recovery from the abuse,

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neglect or exploitation.

I have direct experience with the kind of an emergency fund proposed. From 2007 until 2011, I was part of a federal grant to address abuse in later life in Maine called the Elder Justice Project. As part of this federal grant, in 2010, we created the Elder Abuse Emergency Compensation Fund, which was administered by the Kennebec County District Attorney. To qualify for the funds, a victim had to be 50 or older, a victim of abuse or neglect at the hands of a family member or caregiver and have no other source of funding to cover the expense. We funded several important things for victims, but I wanted to tell this one story, even though the victim was not incapacitated or dependent.

This was a woman who was a long time victim of abuse within marriage in very rural, northern Maine. She fled after making arrangements to stay at Martha's Cottage, transitional housing available to older victims of abuse, in southern Maine. Unfortunately, her vehicle was easy to identify and her husband was seen hunting her in the town where she was living. She needed to sell her vehicle to purchase another, less visible one – one that was not known to her husband. She was able to cover the cost of the new car and insurance, but did not have money to register the new car. We paid for this expense, which made it possible for her to get to work and to begin to build a new life for herself, which she was eventually able to do.

Whether a victim of abuse or neglect needs a new winter coat, a bus ticket to a new destination, help modifying a home to remain safely living alone, the state should have a discretionary fund to help. By enacting LD 325, we are providing a flexible financial resource in cases of emergencies to clients of the Adult Protective Services System that can make a difference in their safety and recovery from victimization. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of LD 325.

I'm sorry I could not be there in person today to deliver this testimony, but am available to work with the sponsors and committee to find a way to ensure clients of the Adult Protective Services System can find a sense of safety and security in emergency situations by having access to emergency funds.

Thank you.

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