Blueprint for Action on Aging
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Vision Statement

Maine's aging population is an opportunity. The state must seize it. The face of Maine is changing rapidly and has been for a long time. Though we are the oldest state in the nation, we cannot allow the challenges of aging to paralyze us. We must be energized by this challenge and capitalize on the assets of our aging population.

If we act now, we can ensure our seniors have an opportunity to age with dignity. We can meet growing health care needs. We can support our employers who are looking at a retiring workforce. And we can grow our economy all at the same time. However, there is no silver bullet. There is no one piece of legislation or community program that will allow us to meet this complex challenge. And there is no one-size-fits-all approach. We need a community-by-community plan that moves our state in the right direction - one community at a time. We also need all hands on deck. This won't work unless people from all segments of our economy collaborate to craft and implement innovative solutions. This is our blueprint for action.

Background

Nationally, we are seeing one of the biggest demographic shifts in our history, and Maine is at its epicenter. One in four Mainers will be over the age 65 in the next two decades. And while we have been increasing the number of workers in our state by about 800 people per year, we are forecasted to need an additional 2,500 people per year to meet projected 2017 employment needs – creating a gap of 1700 workers.[i] These are not just numbers; they are powerful statistics with huge implications for our state and our economy. Whether you are among the aging population facing costly health care needs, a family member balancing work with caring for an aging parent, or an employer looking at a retiring workforce, Maine's shifting demographics impact you.

Community-Based Solutions and Legislative Leadership

In late 2013 and early 2014, Maine Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mark Eves and the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) convened the Speaker's Round Table on Aging and the Maine Summit on Aging. These events brought together leaders from business, higher education, health care, finance, philanthropy and state and municipal government to lay out a community-based approach to turning the challenges of Maine's aging population into an opportunity.[ii] Both efforts were made possible by a generous grant by the John T. Gorman Foundation.

Participants learned about our aging demographic, considered its implications, and shared ideas about innovative solutions and growing opportunities. During the discussions, it became clear that Maine employers, health and education systems, municipalities and state leaders must discover and implement innovative ways to attract and retain workers, create housing and transportation options for older adults, and deliver supports and services to keep people healthy and thriving in their homes. By the end of the process, more than 500 people

lent their voices to the discussion and helped prioritize the following recommendations in the areas of *Workforce and Employment, Designing and Creating Aging Friendly Communities, Higher Education, Public and Private Safety, and the Health and Well-being of older Mainers.*

Building Aging Friendly Communities:
Accessing housing, transportation and services while combating isolation

Participants at both events prioritized the creation of aging friendly communities.[iii] These are communities that actively engage older adults in creating infrastructure and services that effectively accommodate needs across the full aging continuum. These communities are built around thoughtful planning that identifies the greatest needs of older adults and implements plans that address issues like access to health care and support services, isolation, access to reliable and appropriate transportation options, access to affordable housing and walkable sidewalks and streets.[iv] In order to encourage towns and cities across Maine to establish and duplicate these communities, recommendations include:

<u>Community Based Solutions</u>

- *Create and promote safe and affordable housing*, including exploring rezoning of housing stock and development of housing with proximity to services.

- *Create a best practice database for transportation strategies and housing models.* Develop a publicly available best practice database to provide information and strategies for municipal leaders interested in building aging-friendly communities.

- *Change zoning laws to encourage home sharing and support the ability of older Mainers to remain in their homes.* Modify local zoning ordinances to permit home modifications to accommodate home sharing or multi-family living arrangements that enable older adults to remain at home. Create networking opportunities for people to learn about safe and affordable home sharing models.

- *Support information sharing between municipalities.* Share information and best practices, highlighting the success of municipalities where current housing stock meets the needs of older adults and where zoning allows for assistive housing co-located with services and the creation of new models of assisted living and nursing home care.

- *Bring developers, finance and municipal leaders together.* Capitalize on the shared interest and diversity of perspectives to analyze best practices and implement aging friendly ideas like co-located housing, coordinated health care services and increased public transportation.

- *Promote the creation of intergenerational community centers that co-locate child and elder care systems, including quality early education and adult day programming.*

- *Promote successful models of supported community-based living, like the village-to-village model.* Villages are community-established, membership-based, grass-roots organizations run by volunteers and paid staff that coordinate member access to services including transportation, home repair, wellness and social programs and vetted, discounted providers. Communities should be encouraged to expand the village-to-village concept to be a public/private partnership that accommodates the needs of low income older adults as well as those who can pay for services.

<u>Legislative Solutions</u>

- *Create, support and promote efficient, affordable energy and heating sources, weatherization programs and home repair programs.* Many older adults cannot afford to repair homes or make them more energy efficient. Support programs that provide resources or tools to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy costs.

- *Support transportation initiatives.* Many older people live rurally and no longer drive. Older Mainers who no longer drive also face the prospect of limited transportation services or are disabled and unable to utilize the even fewer transportation services designed to meet their needs.

- *Enhance access to broadband internet* to ensure assistive technology can be deployed and to reduce isolation.

Higher Education

Maine has a high number of aging workers in the health care and social service areas who will retire at a time when we face increased demand. Participants agreed that higher education will be critical partners in helping Maine employers fill this coming void. With fewer health care workers, older adults living rurally will increasingly have to rely on assistive technology to allow them to remain living safely at home. Participants agreed that Maine should be on the cutting edge of designing and testing new technologies that support older adults living at home and should lead on resolving privacy issues that come with new technologies.

<u>Community Based Solutions</u>

- *Create a central public repository.* Create a repository for current research efforts, aging initiatives and aging programs at all Maine institutions of higher education and promote sharing of best practices in integrating needs of older adults in healthcare and social service educational programs in Maine. Promote best practices across education systems.

- *Identify gaps in current aging research and research needs and work to fill them.* Engage partners in Maine's aging network to inventory and address the ongoing research needs of these partners.

- *Promote new initiatives and technologies.* Encourage Maine's institutions of higher education to create new technologies aimed at meeting the needs of older adults, including technologies that support independent living safely in one's home, even with disability. Ideas included assisted driving, telemedicine, and home monitoring.

- *Collaborate with business leaders to design ongoing training and educational programs geared toward our emerging workforce replacement needs.*

<u>Legislative Solutions</u>

- *Address credentialing issues for in-migrating older professionals and "new Mainers".* Make necessary

changes in law and licensing to allow "New Mainers" and people who retire to Maine from other states to use their existing skills and education– either to re-enter the workforce in Maine or to volunteer using their licenses.

- *Provide education loan forgiveness.* Provide loan forgiveness for people who devote time to older adult care-giving or choose a career in direct care service.

Workforce and Employment

A large percentage of Maine's workforce will retire in the next ten years and we do not have a sufficient working-age population to fill the gap. We must attract new workers to Maine, capitalize on the depth of skill and experience of Maine's aging workforce, and support employees who are working caregivers.

Community Based Solutions

- *Create and promote a model for Aging Friendly Workplaces that helps employers support aging employees and employees who are family caregivers.* Survey Maine's business community to discover innovative HR practices that support caregivers and aging workers. Promote and disseminate these practices –such as flexible work hours, telecommuting, paid sick days, and training to support older workers extending careers or returning to work. Assist smaller employers to develop aging-friendly HR practices that take into account their unique challenges.

- *Collaborate with higher education to address workforce replacement needs.* Support and expand industry-specific training programs in areas likely to experience gaps from a retiring workforce. Promote opportunities for older workers to share their knowledge and expertise, even after they leave the workforce.

- *Survey industry/business for best practices for recruiting, utilizing and engaging the skills and knowledge of older workers*. Identify ways to promote these practices with other employers.

Legislative Solutions

- *Support funding for direct care workers and services that help people remain at home.*

- *Consider incentives, like the Early Care and Education Revolving Loan Program, that would encourage employers and municipalities to create adult day programming that provide caregiver workers access to quality adult day care during working hours.*

Public & Private Safety Work Group

Nearly 1 in 9 older adults will experience abuse and neglect, most likely at the hands of a family member or caregiver. Often, older victims don't report because of shame, reliance on the abuser or fear of being institutionalized. Financial exploitation is a growing and serious form of elder abuse that is often perpetrated against older adults who are isolated and lonely. This form of abuse is on the rise particularly as older adults leave their communities and support systems behind to live and access services in more urban areas.

Community Based Solutions

- *Build connections between first responders, health care and community organizations to better respond to the needs of older adults.* Ensure all people who regularly come in contact with older adults recognize red flags for elder abuse, understand how to respond, and know where to refer for support. Develop locally available mutual training opportunities on elder abuse for volunteers, first responders, direct care and health care workers who work with older adults.

- *Increase the number of local TRIADS in Maine*.* TRIADS are local partnerships between law enforcement, community based organizations and older adults that work to prevent elder abuse by promoting safety initiatives aimed at decreasing isolation and increasing connection to community and supports.

- *Address scams and frauds.* Identify and leverage formal and informal communication systems to immediately disseminate public safety alerts related to new scams and frauds.

- *Initiate and expand wellness checks by first responders or trained community volunteers.* Survey law enforcement and community organizations to discover models for wellness checks, share the information broadly and encourage other communities to adopt the models.

- *Create user-friendly financial exploitation planning tools for aging adults and their caregivers.*

- *Train first responders (fire, rescue, police) on recognizing and appropriately dealing with people who have dementia.**

Legislative Solutions

- *Ensure privacy protections and safety protocols for emerging technology that can be invasive or invite exploitation.* Emerging technology can provide significant advantages to monitoring areas like health, finance, and security, but it can also create vulnerabilities and opportunities for exploitation. Our privacy laws should be in line with growing technological integration of telemedicine, electronic medical records and telehealth technologies.

- *Strengthen criminal laws related to financial exploitation of older adults.**

- *Ensure legal protections for people living with dementia.*

- *Broaden the scope of the Computer Crimes Unit to investigate computer based financial exploitation, which often targets older adults.*

*The Maine Council for Elder Abuse Prevention or another entity is already actively working on the idea. The working group that forms to address these issues will work in partnership with Maine Council for Elder Abuse Prevention leadership.

Health & Well Being

Maine has a high number of Boomer-aged workers in health care and social services who will be retiring at the

very time that we face an increased need for these services. The need to increase our direct care workforce is hampered by the fact that these jobs tend to provide low wage, minimal benefits and hard working conditions. Community based providers that help keep older people living at home are struggling in some areas and non-existent in others. Older adults in Maine often live far from needed health care and have difficulty accessing and navigating the health care system. Further, health and direct care services are often provided in silos without coordination and a shared care plan. These issues are particularly difficult for older adults living with cognitive impairment or dementia and the loved ones who care for them.

Community Based Solutions

- *Increase coordination, quality and continuity of healthcare and community-based services.* Support the development and promotion of best practices that support a coordinated community-based response to the health and community-based needs of older adults. These include local-level volunteer "community navigators" and health care workers who coordinate availability of needed health and home care services and support older adults and emerging community health worker models.

- *Build stronger collaborative referral systems* between first responders, health and home care workers and community based organizations.

- *Increase awareness within health care systems* of the needs of older adults, especially those living with disability or dementia, and their caregivers.

- *Increase use of telemedicine, home monitoring, and telehealth technologies.* Identify and promote currently available technologies, identify barriers to use of these technologies and identify areas of need for development of new technologies.

- *Increase outreach to under-served elder populations*, including New Mainers, REL Mainers, GLBT elders, island dwelling elders, and older incarcerated adults.

- *Develop and support integrated healthcare services throughout the continuum of care.*

Legislative Solutions

- *Support funding for direct care workers and for support services that help people remain at home* (Meals on Wheels, Adult Day Services, Respite Care, Home Based Care).

- *Adjust MaineCare provider rates for services that support aging across the aging continuum.* Most providers of elder-care services including personal support services, adult day services, home-based care, residential care and nursing home care, have not seen rate increases for services for more than a decade. Reimbursement rates no longer cover the cost of providing services and many providers have stopped providing services in many rural areas, leaving older adults without access to needed services.

Next Steps – The Maine Aging Initiative

The MCOA and the Maine Speaker of the House have launched a formal initiative to support these broad concepts and address specific systemic barriers that impede innovation and growth. The over-arching goal is to help older adults thrive in their homes and communities.

The Speaker will convene a series of working groups that will take the priorities generated at the Round Tables and Summit and work toward accomplishing identified goals. The MCOA will lead the work groups in collaboration with community/business leaders and will promote cross-collaboration between the groups as they accomplish their work.

The groups will be convened in early April and will begin meeting as the schedules of working group members permit. The initial focus of the working groups will be on actions that can be accomplished within 6 months to a year and within existing resources.

Working groups will be convened by the Speaker through formal invitation and will be intentionally small (no more than 15 members) to ensure efficiency. Co-conveners of the working groups will use others who are interested in the work of the group as resources. Co-convenors will form subgroups to complete specific tasks that may include resource members.   Working group plans and outcomes will be tracked publicly on the MCOA's website and the MCOA will launch an interactive mechanism on the site to allow the public to lend ideas and input to the process.   In addition, the MCOA will design and launch an interactive platform where communities and local groups can share information about on-going information and support one another with the flow of information and ideas. Working groups will be encouraged to share additional legislative ideas with the Speaker as work progresses.

The "Aging Issues" Legislative Caucus

Over the course of the Round Table and Summit discussions, several issues deserving of legislative inquiry and action arose. More than 25 legislators from both parties actively participated and demonstrated strong interest in remaining involved in solving the many challenges facing our older adults and our shifting workforce. To facilitate addressing these challenges, Speaker Eves will convene a bipartisan Aging Issues Legislative Caucus that will meet regularly to consider legislative action to support this work. The Caucus has initial plans to discuss the following proposals:

- Work with Maine Development Fund to integrate our aging demographic and its impact on our economy into its Policy Leadership Academy. This will ensure legislators are aware of the complexity of the issues and the urgent need both to attract new workers and support older adults aging in place.

- Collaborate with the Maine Children's Growth Council to promote intergenerational community centers where child and elder care systems are co-located (including quality early education and adult day programming) and create roles for older adults in mentoring, literacy, and home visiting programs.

- Address credentialing issues for in-migrating older professionals and "new Mainers".

- Provide loan forgiveness for those who devote time to caring for older adults or who choose a career in direct care.

- Continue focus on enhancing access to broadband to ensure assistive technology can be deployed.

- Collaborate with state agencies that focus on financial literacy to promote and disseminate information for older adults and their caregivers about how to best protect their finances through the aging process.

Conclusion

Maine is at the leading edge of the learning curve in understanding the impact of our aging demographic on our people, businesses and economy. We have the collective will and vision to show the rest of the country how to take a thoughtful, innovative approach to supporting people as they age. We undertake this work understanding that our people – especially our older people – are our greatest asset. With their help, we can build strong, vibrant communities that not only support people throughout their lives but also attract new workers to Maine.

[i] *Key to Maine's Economic Future is Attracting People to Move to the State Economist Says,* Bangor Daily News, December 17, 2013, Nick McRea. http://bangordailynews.com/2013/12/17/business/key-to-maines-economic-future-is-attracting-people-to-move-to-the-state-economist-says/.

[ii] The Round Table consisted of four meetings, held in September and October of 2013, attended by the same core group of 100 people who heard formal presentations on (1) our population demographic and its impact on the economy by economist Charles Colgan, (2) a new vision for aging and long term care by VT Aging Commissioner, Susan Wehry, (3) creating aging friendly communities by **Building A Collaborative Community Response to Aging in Place** author Patricia Kimball and (4) challenges and opportunities ahead for our employers regarding an aging workforce by Jobs for the Future Program Director John Dorrer. On January 17, 2014, the Maine Summit on Aging expanded the conversation. At the Summit, nearly 400 participants from around the state lent their voice to the planning process for the Maine Aging Initiative. Participants included aging advocates, business leaders, policy makers, home, health and hospice care workers, municipal officials, housing experts, town planners, older adults, faith leaders and more. Like the Round Table Discussions, most of the day-long Summit was focused on innovative solutions already being employed in Maine communities. In the afternoon, a series of facilitated work sessions offered participants the opportunity to discuss ideas generated at the Round Table Discussions, share new ideas and prioritize the work to be accomplished. All of the PowerPoint presentations from the Round Table Discussions, videos of the Summit on Aging presentations and the many resources offered to participants during these events, are available publicly on the MCOA's website at http://mainecouncilonaging.org/maine-aging-initiative.php.

[iii] See: *Building a Collaborative Community Response to Aging in Place: A Guide to Creating an Aging Friendly Maine, One Community at a Time,* Kimball, Maurer, Parham, 2012. http://maine4a.org/image_upload/FINALREPORT.pdf .

[iv] During the conference Speaker Eves highlighted the city of Saco, which is one of three cities nationally to be implementing t the aging-friendly model.