



**Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services**

**In Favor of LD LD 1162 An Act To Further Expand Drug Price
Transparency and LD 1409 An Act To Improve Price Transparency of
Prescription Drugs Sold in Maine**

Delivered on April 16, 2019

Greetings Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial 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 more than 80 organizations, businesses, municipalities and older Mainers working together to make sure we can 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 LDs 1162 and 1409.

Prescription medications are often a key component to older people maintaining good health and remaining active in work and community life. Unfortunately, consumers pay more out-of-pocket for their prescription drugs than they do for any other kind of health care. When costs for life-saving drugs like insulin skyrocket or a doctor prescribes a new expensive inhaler, an older person on a low, fixed income simply cannot absorb the costs. Instead, she either has to go without the drugs as prescribed or go without heat, food and other necessities.

Health care providers see this all the time. A patient may ration an inhaler or not adhere to the necessary drug regimen because of the cost, risking life-threatening problems and avoidable trips to the hospital. Health care professionals can help reduce these situations by making sure their patients are prescribed the lowest cost drug available to treat the health problem. Price transparency is the only way prescribers are able to identify lower-cost options and improve a patient's financial experience.

Currently, about 75,000 Mainers over 65 do not have enough money to meet their basic needs, but don't qualify for any means tested programs, like the Medicare Savings Program and Drugs for Maine's Elderly. At least 75% of them are taking prescription medications for chronic conditions. We can either help them maintain their health by ensuring their prescriptions are affordable, or we can pay for the higher costs associated with avoidable hospitalizations and early entry into facility-based care.

None of us understand why drug prices are increasing. Transparency will help us understand what actions we can take to get costs under control. What we do know, is that medications are only effective if patients can afford to get and use them. These bills take a step in the right direction to helping low-income older people access lower-cost drugs and helping shine a light on the cost-drivers for prescription drugs. For these reasons, we encourage you to vote in favor of LDs 1162 and 1409.

Thank you.

Board Chair: Mary Jane Richards, COO North Country Associates
Vice Chair Don Harden, Director of Adult Services/Catholic Charities Maine
Treasurer: Betsy Sawyer-Manter/Seniors Plus
Secretary: Marilyn Gugliucci, Director/Geriatrics Education and Research, UNE