



**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 1499 – An Act to Establish the
Maine Prescription Drug Affordability Board**

Delivered in Writing on April 17, 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. We are in favor of LD 1499.

Prescription medications are a key component to many 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 increased 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 too often. A patient may ration an inhaler or not adhere to a 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 and caps on price increases are ways to help prescribers identify and prescribe lower-cost options.

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.

For these reasons, we urge this Committee to establish an independent Prescription Drug Affordability Board to review drug costs and the causes of significant increases in costs. The Board should be able to set fair limits on how much Maine purchasers should have to pay if the increased costs are found to be unreasonable. Medications are only effective if patients can afford to get and use them as prescribed. LD 1499 will help shine a light on the cost-drivers for prescription drugs and help keep prescription drugs more affordable. For these reasons, we encourage you to vote in favor of LDs 1499.

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