



**Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of  
the Maine Council on Aging  
To Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**

**In Favor of LD 455 - An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue  
To Expand Maine's Research, Development, Commercialization and  
Clinical Infrastructure Assets To Improve Outcomes for Maine  
Families with Members Suffering from Alzheimer's, Dementia and  
Other Diseases of Aging**

Delivered in person on January 14, 2020

Greetings Senator Breen, Representative Gattine, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

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 90 organizations, businesses, municipalities 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 455.

A spoonful of ingenuity can go a long way to relieving human suffering. 100 years ago, life expectancy was less than 40 years – that means most of us in this room would not be here. Today, the average life expectancy in the United States is 76. Life expectancy nearly doubled in a century almost entirely because of our ability to prevent, treat, and even cure diseases through research and development. Many of the things that used to kill a lot of us like tetanus, polio, yellow fever, and small pox, have been nearly eradicated because researchers created vaccines that help us avoid contracting these diseases. Other diseases, like cancer, multiple sclerosis, and dementia have proven more difficult to prevent and cure. However, researchers remain undaunted, and are working diligently to find cures for these diseases, including dementia researchers here in Maine.

More than six million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Onset of the disease normally occurs after age 60. In Maine, about 30,000 people are living with dementia. Nearly 70,000 Mainers are informal family caregivers for people with dementia. Many of them have had to or will have to leave the workforce to care for their loved ones. In 2019, it was expected that dementia would cost the nation \$290 billion. Taken as a whole, Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are taking a huge toll on Maine people, our workers and workforce, and our economy, and it's clear that we should be doing everything we can do to help find a cure.

As the oldest state in the nation, Maine should be on the cutting edge of research and development in finding cures to age-related diseases like dementia. Thanks to the Jackson Laboratory, our health systems, and our universities, Maine is leading research in many areas of dementia, but additional funding is required if we're to be successful. If enacted and approved by the voters, LD 455 would go a

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

long way to advancing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research in Maine. It would leverage an equal amount of funding to be put toward finding a cure and would also attract quality researchers to Maine who are working in this field. It might just be the investment that sparks the kind of ingenuity that leads to a cure. It's not every day that we have the opportunity to make this sort of lasting investment for the future of all Maine people.

For every person living with dementia, for their caregivers and families, for their care providers, and for our economy, we urge you to vote in favor of LD 455. Thank you.