



**Written Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
The Maine Council on Aging
To Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services**

**In Favor of
LD 1547 – An Act To Promote Intergovernmental
Coordination Regarding Age-friendly State Initiatives**

Presented on April 27, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing 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 more than 100 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in support of LD 1547.

Maine has an incredible opportunity to lead the nation in building new systems that take full advantage of the Longevity Era. Just a century ago, our life expectancy was less than 40 years. Today, the average life expectancy in the United States is 76. As we know, older people are now being active, engaged, and productive long into their 80s, 90s and even 100s! However, the systems we rely on daily to live engaged, productive lives don't always work for us as our abilities and finances change as we age. With vision and an innovative spirit, we can modify these systems to help people remain as engaged and productive as they can be long into old age.

As we age, we touch almost every aspect of life there is. Aging isn't just about health and needing services it's also about work, creativity, and volunteerism. It's about farming and lobstering, teaching and learning, legislating and governing. How well we age is dependent upon how well our housing meets our physical needs, whether we can still engage fully in all aspects of life when we can no longer drive, whether we have access to lifelong learning opportunities, how well our communities are planned, and whether we can still earn a living to supplement our retirement savings. It also depends upon whether we can use new tools to assist us in our work, play, and in everyday life.

Now, as we enter this new era of longevity, it's time to be more intentional and thoughtful about promoting and supporting vigorous interdepartmental collaboration and coordination on aging

policy development and program implementation that supports the self-sufficiency, safety, opportunities, and economic stability of older Mainers.

LD 1547 proposes to do just that. It codifies and continues actions state officials in Maine have taken to begin the journey of becoming an Age Friendly State. We are incredibly fortunate in Maine to have state officials who have had the forethought to know that this kind of intergovernmental work is critical for the next chapter in Maine's history. Our Governor has joined the network of Age Friendly States. Joining is network is the first step, but it in no way makes Maine Age Friendly. State leaders have led a stakeholder process and have developed a plan called Age Friendly Maine. The plan, if operationalized, will result in Maine becoming truly Age Friendly. However, it must be operationalized, and, to make progress on the plan, significant details, actors, and measurements must be added to it.

Thus, for Maine to actually become Age Friendly, we must create an accountable system to ensure that the Age Friendly State plan is implemented regardless of changes in administrations and shifting priorities. This concept of an Age Friendly State must be embedded in our state's culture, and the work must endure as our state evolves. Codifying this intergovernmental process ensures we will actually begin adapting systems to meet the changing needs of older Mainers. The punchline is, when we look through the lens of aging to address system changes, we create systems that work for everyone; we create systems that support communities that are great to grow up in, great to work in, and great to grow old in. That's the way Maine should be!

For these reasons, we urge you to support LD 1547.

Thank you.

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