



**Testimony of Marge Kilkelly on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the
Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology**

In Support of LD 1967 Resolve, to Establish the Maine
Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program

Submitted May 15, 2025

Thank you Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and Members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.

My name is Marge Kilkelly, and I am a Policy Consultant for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) which is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 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. The MCOA is a unifying force across sectors that is creating a new narrative about aging and older people in Maine with the goal of building local, statewide, and national support for the systemic changes needed to support our new longevity.

I am testifying in Favor of LD 1967 Resolve, to Establish the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program.

Mainers are living longer than ever before. With a relatively healthy older population, older adults are remaining active in our workforce, leading civic and social organizations, and developing into an impressive volunteer corp.

When older Mainers are able to stay in their communities it not only enhances their quality of life but also provides benefits to the community. Age-integrated communities create a sense of belonging, fostering stronger social bonds and a more cohesive society. They create opportunities for older adults to serve as mentors and role models. The interactions between community members can help break down age stereotypes lead us to a future without ageism. Age-integrated communities also result in better health outcomes, more community involvement, and decreased loneliness for older individuals.

While nearly all older people want to age in their homes for as long as possible, many older Mainers come to the point where they realize they must leave their homes because they cannot afford to stay. They're living in homes they struggle to afford and energy costs are often a factor.

A 2024 report Quantifying Maine's Household Energy Burden and Affordability Gap estimated that over 200,000 Maine households are facing unaffordable home energy burdens. While this burden is especially true for low income households, even moderate income households face home energy gaps of nearly \$700. 29% of older Mainers live in low income families. Improving home energy efficiency result in cost savings that can impact the entire quality of life.

For those on Social Security in 2024 the average benefit was \$1,900.00 per month. About a third of all older Mainers live on Social Security alone, with no other retirement benefits. However, many Mainers,

especially women, receive less because of working part time, being a stay at home parent, a caregiver, or earning relatively low incomes in working years.

Older women who live alone are more likely impacted by the rising energy costs. In 2022, the Muskie School of Public Service published a data report on the Economic Security of Older Women in Maine, prepared for the Maine Women's Lobby Educational Fund and the Maine Council on Aging.¹ This report documents the devastating impacts of lifelong economic gender disparity on older women in Maine and nationally. Specifically, the report shows that more than half of the 50,000 Maine women (65+) who live alone do not have enough money to meet their basic needs, as determined by the Elder Economic Standard Security Index (the Elder Index). The Elder Index finds that an older Mainer in good health living in a home she owns without a mortgage needs a monthly income of \$2,110 just to meet her basic needs.

While many older homeowners are aware that they need to make improvements, there are lots of questions. What do I need to make my home warmer? Who provides these services? Are there programs available to help with the costs? Which project should I do first? Who can I trust to provide the best information?

For too many people, the lack of answers to these questions leaves them either not feeling confident enough to do home weatherization improvements or discovering that the money they have spent has not addressed their most critical need.

LD 1967 creates the Maine Home Energy Navigator and Coaching Pilot Program an innovative program to address these questions and more. By performing home energy assessments, educating consumers about energy saving opportunities, providing information about financial support and even assisting in analyzing contractor recommendations the staff are living into the definitions of Navigator and Coach which are both needed in the complicated world of energy efficiency.

I urge you to support LD 1967 to support older people who want to stay in their homes and continue to support and participate in their communities.

¹ <https://mainecouncilonaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Economic-Security-Older-Women-in-Maine-Report-FINAL.pdf>