

Cabinet on Aging Meeting Minutes

April 1, 2024, from 2-3 PM (by Zoom)

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Lambrew welcomed Dawn Mealey, Deputy Director, Bureau of Employment Services at Maine DOL who will support Cabinet activities and planning as a representative from Maine DOL.

There was a reminder that May is Older American Month. This year's theme is "Powered by Connection," which recognizes the profound impact that meaningful relationships and social connections have on health and well-being. [See <https://acl.gov/oam/2024/older-americans-month-2024>]

Update on Cabinet on Aging Activities

Community Connections Pilot

The Cabinet Coordinator provided a brief update on the Community Connections pilot, a \$2.5 million initiative funded through federal dollars received by the Department of Health and Human Services through Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act. This includes development of a Community Connector program in pilot Lifelong communities to help neighbors and residents identify and access desired supports and make it more comfortable to accept help or to participate in social opportunities. It also supports Lifelong communities' innovative programming through mini-grants and strengthened partnerships with Area Agencies on Aging.

The State's contracting process is underway with key partners: University of Maine's Center on Aging and Maine's Area Agencies on Aging. While funding is pending, there has been a lot of activity with the Area Agencies on Aging and the Maine Center on Aging to get as much of the program design in place as possible. The Cabinet Coordinator participated in a statewide call with Lifelong communities on March 1 to discuss the project and receive input. Lifelong Communities have added information to their website, which will be updated as the project moves forward: <https://www.lifelongmaine.org/library/community-connections>

Housing Updates

Home sharing: Director Brennan provided updates on Maine's home sharing program, which has received a fair amount of publicity over the past month or so. Home sharing programs bring together people who have an extra room in their house with individuals seeking a place to live.

While not a choice or option for everyone, home sharing can provide companionship and extra income to the homeowner and more affordable housing for the renter.

The Legislature tasked MaineHousing to coordinate a statewide home sharing program. Following an RFP process, MaineHousing contracted with an organization known as Nesterly for statewide implementation. Nesterly helps match hosts and guests using an on-line app and screening process. MaineHousing has convened an implementation group that includes AARP, Maine Council on Aging, UMaine Center on Aging, representative from Lifelong communities, and several others. In addition to public awareness and educational outreach, the first phase is developing a supply of housing (hosts) this spring, which needs to occur before opening the program to interested renters (guests). A report is due to the Legislature January 2025 reporting on the effectiveness of the program.

The University of New England is hosting an informational session in partnership with Lifelong Maine, AARP Maine, Age Friendly Saco, and the UMaine Center on Aging. Anyone interested in knowing more about the program can register for the Zoom informational session on May 15, 2024 at: [Maine HomeShare: Putting Extra Rooms to Work for Personal & Social Good | University of New England in Maine \(une.edu\)](#)

Housing Data Portal: The Cabinet Coordinator noted that the Maine Housing Data Portal will go live later this month. The portal was created in consultation with the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, the Department of Economic and Community Development, MaineHousing, and various housing stakeholders. It will reflect data at the state, regional, county, and municipal levels, including:

- Population and demographic data such as household size, age and racial/ethnic distribution
- Economic data such as employment, household income and poverty rate
- Housing data including cost, cost burdens, vacancy, and age of stock.

Presentation: Maine's Digital Equity Plan

Commissioner Lambrew introduced Jessica Perez, the Digital Equity Manager at the Maine Connectivity Authority. Jessica presented Maine's Digital Equity Plan, the first plan to be approved nationally, focused on the goals and strategies impacting older adults. The plan includes Health Aging goals to help older adults age in place, address social isolation, and allow greater access to healthcare and on-line resources. Strategies include increasing broadband access, improving affordability, access to affordable devices, improving digital skills, and helping people stay safe on-line. The full presentation is included as part of these minutes.

Closing Comments

The Cabinet's First Year Report is now available: [Cabinet on Aging First Year Report](#)

Sydney Brown will be joining GOPIF later this month as the Anti-Hunger Policy Coordinator to oversee implementation of Maine's Plan to End Hunger by 2030.

The Office of Aging and Disability Services is hosted two upcoming public hearings on Maine's proposed State Plan on Aging:

- Maine State Plan on Aging Public Hearing #1 – April 30, 2024 – 9:00 to 10:30 am

Registration link: <https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/1ae983b3-f567-4873-ba19-a112733143fa@413fa8ab-207d-4b62-9bcd-ea1a8f2f864e>

- Maine State Plan on Aging Public Hearing #2 – May 2, 2024 – 9:00 to 10:30 am

Registration link: <https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/e5fd2a82-5fa0-469e-b854-cfb756ada727@413fa8ab-207d-4b62-9bcd-ea1a8f2f864e>

Next Cabinet on Aging Meeting: Monday, June 3, 2024, from 2-3 PM