



Maine Credit Union League

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH COVERAGE, INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE CREDIT UNION LEAGUE

IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 566, An Act to Protect Vulnerable Adults from Financial Exploitation

February 28, 2019

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Ed Pineau and I am here today to testify in support of L.D. 566 on behalf of the Maine Credit Union League. The league represents Maine's 55 credit unions and its nearly 700,000 members.

According to the National Adult Protective Services Association, financial exploitation is the fastest growing form of abuse of seniors. Abuse often occurs between seniors and people they trust, such as caregivers, family members, neighbors, and friends.

Seniors also are victimized by scam artists who offer "too good to be true" deals or threatening claims. Imagine receiving a call that your grandson or granddaughter was in jail and needed you to send money fast. Seniors receive these types of messages all the time and many react quickly to help – too quickly to realize the scenario is fictitious.

Financial exploitation of seniors is becoming a frightening epidemic in this country. Maine needs policies like L.D. 566 to better protect Maine's elder population. Raising awareness about this issue and providing a path for reporting abuse is critical for prevention. Ignoring this problem won't make it go away; it will just put more vulnerable people at risk.

As a credit union network, we've worked hard to address senior financial abuse. In addition to offering traditional services like retirement planning and financial counseling, we support initiatives like Senior\$afe to help guard against abuse. Several years ago, the Maine Credit Union League was a founding member of a group that launched Senior\$afe in the effort to help Maine's elderly protect their finances. This program has become a model for the nation.

The Senior\$afe training program, which is conducted through a partnership between the state, Legal Services for the Elderly, Area Agencies on Aging, the Maine Credit Union League and other financial services groups, helps staff recognize the signs of unusual financial activity and how to respond to certain situations when this occurs. Hundreds of credit union employees have participated in this program since its inception and we will continue to participate to help recognize red flags.

Thank you for considering our industry's views and allowing me to testify before your Committee today. I'd also like to thank Representative Bailey and her strong bipartisan list of co-sponsors for bringing this important legislation forward. Maine's credit unions strongly support policies that protect our senior population. We hope the Legislature will move forward in making this policy change.