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Resolve, To Improve Retention, Quality and Benefits for Direct Care Health Workers

Sec. 1 Long-term care direct care workers; study. Resolved: That the Department of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Department of Labor, shall conduct a study of direct care workers in state-funded and MaineCare-funded programs to:

1. Examine the wage, benefit and reimbursement structures for direct care workers in all long-term care settings, including, but not limited to, nursing facilities, residential care facilities, mental retardation waiver homes and home care;

2. Determine the cost of a wage floor of \$8.50 per hour and the cost of a wage floor of \$10 per hour for entry-level direct care workers, including certified nursing assistants, personal support specialists, home health aides, homemakers and direct support professionals. The study must include determination of the cost of proportional increases in current wage scales for more experienced workers and employer-related costs such as FICA;

3. Develop options to extend MaineCare or other health insurance coverage for direct care workers;

4. Evaluate the need for a direct care worker registry, including desired objectives of such a registry and a cost estimate;

5. Survey persons formerly employed as direct care workers in long-term care settings to determine whether they would return to work as direct care workers if the pay were increased to \$10 per hour; and

6. Survey organizations that provide services to senior citizens through paid workers and through volunteers to determine the level of interest among older persons in becoming direct care workers, either full-time or part-time and within their physical capabilities, to assist persons who are elderly or persons with disabilities.

The department shall invite participation of, and consultation with, interested parties involved in long-term care or home health care, including direct support and personal assistance workers from all settings during the course of the study. The departments shall conduct the study within existing financial resources. The department shall submit its report, including any necessary implementing legislation, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters no later than January 1, 2007.