

Lisa Wesel  
Bowdoinham  
LD 3

President Jackson, Speaker Talbot Ross and members of the committee:

I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 3, in principle, but in opposition to the way it is being funded.

My name is Lisa Wesel. I live in Bowdoinham with my husband and our 26-year-old daughter, who has intellectual and developmental disabilities and epilepsy. She lives with us not because she wants to but because she has no choice. She is among the more than 2,000 Maine adults who are languishing on the Sec. 21 waitlist, a waitlist that the DHHS seems to have little motivation to address.

So imagine my dismay when I learned that \$35 million would be taken from Home and Community Based Services to send heating assistance checks to households earning as much as \$200,000 a year. I understand that the \$35 million in state money will be swapped out for \$35 million in federal money, so on paper it looks like a wash. But it doesn't feel that way from where I'm sitting. For families like mine, this is the latest in a series of clear messages from the state that funding for people with disabilities is a very low priority, that we should be satisfied for the scraps we beg for each year because scraps are better than nothing. The system of care for people like my daughter is in crisis. That \$35 million dollars in federal money could have been used to start addressing that crisis rather than to simply maintain the inadequate status quo.

To be clear, I am not arguing against providing heating assistance for those who truly need it. No one in Maine should go without heat, or food, or a home. This is not an "us vs. them" argument. It should be noted that many households with a disabled family member likely qualify for heating assistance, as they are unable to work because they are caring for that family member with little or no support from the state.

But that \$35 million represents a fraction of the total funding for heating assistance. Please consider funding it without taking away the small chance the disability community had to improve their system of care, maybe by lowering the income ceiling, which would still allow the families with the greatest need to get heating assistance. Please consider the proposal put forward by senators Grohoski and Bennett instead of LD 3.

Thank you.