



**LD 206 An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023**

January 26, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Services, my name is Laurie Belden and I serve as the executive director of the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine -- a membership organization representing home care, home health care and hospice providers across the State. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the allocation of supplemental appropriations outlined in LD 206.

The Alliance is a network of home care, home health care and hospice providers across our State delivering home-based care to older adults and disabled individuals of all ages - allowing them to stay in their home and community. Annually, our provider members deliver care to more than 45,000 clients in their residences across Maine, traveling more than 20 million miles. Collectively, home care, home health care and hospice members employ more than 7,000 staff – making this sector one of Maine’s largest employers.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals and nursing facilities received significant attention to ensure patients and residents received safe, quality care. While inpatient beds became scarce and facilities experienced outbreaks, Maine’s home care, home health care and hospice providers proved to be the third pillar in our healthcare system to ensure patients received the care they needed. The most obvious benefit of delivering quality care in the home is that it limited exposure to illness and infection for our particularly-vulnerable Mainers.

Our industry also filled a critical gap in care by administering vaccinations to Mainers experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodations, without regard for cost of this care.

The economic hardships providers continue to face even as the pandemic subsides mirror the acute-care sector: increased pay for staff (including the reliance of temporary staffing agencies) and personal protective equipment (PPE). With patients’ health and well-being paramount, our providers continue to provide services in times of great uncertainty and increasing costs that don’t always align with their operational budget or reimbursement rates.

However, this is an unsustainable model as members are reporting operational losses of 15-20% (tens of millions of dollars). In order to shore up the healthcare system and stabilize in-home services, we respectfully ask that the home care, home health care and hospice industry be beneficiaries of supplemental appropriations in proportion to the \$25 million being allocated to both the hospital and nursing home industries.

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Our providers have responded to extraordinary circumstances and demonstrated the extraordinary value and importance of home care, home health care and hospice during the public health emergency. Hospitals, nursing homes, and home care providers are like a 3-legged stool in the state's healthcare landscape. While the state's hospitals and nursing homes continue to struggle to care for the number of patients that arrive at their facilities, it's important to recognize that home care and hospice providers help to relieve the stress on these two other systems by keeping patients out of acute and long-term care settings. If we do not support and bolster our system of in-home services, we will not be successful at relieving the pressure on hospitals and nursing homes.

We need your help to acknowledge the important role this industry plays in the continuum of care and allocating relief funds will help sustain it as a viable option for Mainers needing care.

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