



The Maine Long-Term Care
OMBUDSMAN
Program

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CORRECTED

Testimony of the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

In Support

LD 206, HPO127, 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

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and
the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

January 26, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Laura Harper. I am a Senior Associate at Moose Ridge Associates. I am here today on behalf of the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsman Program provides advocacy services for older and disabled residents of nursing homes, assisted housing, assisted living and for recipients of home care services. Additionally, the program serves patients in hospitals that experience barriers in accessing the long-term services they need upon discharge.

MEDICAL CARE PAYMENTS TO PROVIDERS 0147

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for COVID-19 supplemental payments to long-term care providers

NURSING FACILITIES 0148

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for COVID-19 supplemental payments to long-term care providers

The Ombudsman Program supports COVID-supplemental funding for long term care providers including nursing homes and assisted housing homes. All of these homes have experienced unprecedented

challenges as a result of the pandemic.

COVID-19 supplemental funding for nursing homes is critical in meeting the increased costs that have resulted from the pandemic. Maine nursing homes, their residents and staff have been hard hit by COVID-19. Staff recruitment and retention has been an ongoing challenge with many nursing homes limiting admissions due to staffing vacancies. In order to meet the needs of residents, providers have been forced to use staffing agencies at a greater cost.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO NURSING HOME CLOSURES

Reduced admissions along with staffing and financial challenges have resulted in nursing home closures. Five nursing homes closed in 2021. One additional nursing home closed in 2022. Older and disabled residents were forced to move as a result of these closures. When a closure occurs, Ombudsman Program staff work with residents, their families and staff to assure that their rights are protected through the transition and that residents remain as close to home as possible in a setting that meets their needs. Finding another nursing home close to each resident's community has become more and more challenging. Unfortunately, even with support, residents may suffer after a move experiencing relocation stress and a decline in condition.

ASSISTED HOUSING CLOSURES

Assisted Housing that includes PNMI's, appendix C and Adult Family Care Homes also provide a much needed care setting. Like nursing homes, these homes have faced financial and staffing challenges. As a result, some residential care homes have closed. As with nursing homes, Ombudsman Program staff work with residents, their families and staff to assure that their rights are protected through the transition to another long-term care home.

Thank you for your consideration.

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