



Testimony of Laura Cordes, Executive Director

In support of

LD 258: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions....for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
February 21, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Baldacci, Representative Sachs, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of both the Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Health and Human Services Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today.

My name is Laura Cordes. I am the Executive Director for Maine Association for Community Service Providers (MACSP). MACSP is the statewide association of 85 agencies providing person centered and individualized educational, vocational, residential and community supports, as well as specialized services and care to a diverse population of children and adults who have either intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or brain injuries, so that they may live full and meaningful lives in the community.

Operating within a longstanding and acute workforce crisis and emerging from a historic public health emergency, we continue to struggle to keep people with disabilities supported in their homes and integrated in their communities.

Once employing over 10,000 Direct Support Professionals to support adults with disabilities, we estimate that we have lost upwards of 30% of our workforce over the last three years. Turnover and overtime rates remain high. We remain concerned about the support needed throughout the system to support people with the most complex medical and behavioral needs, the collapse and closure of group homes and community supports programs and a first ever waitlist for case management services, a service that is needed in order to receive services under Section 21 and 29 services.

Our members provide services to more than 5000 adults under MaineCare Sections 13, 18, 20, 21, 29, 50 and 97 (Appendix F). With the exception of Section 21 Agency Home Support service, commonly known as Group Home Service and Community Supports programs under Sections 21 and 29, we have seen what may be best characterized as a growing stabilization of staffing and services. This is directly tied to the state's commitment, as reflected in this budget, to ensure that the labor costs of direct care service rates equal 125% of the state's minimum wage and that annual COLAs are in place as part of the state's new codified rate setting system. On behalf of our members I want to thank members of both committees, the Department and Administration for working with providers, frontline workers and families and the many stakeholders to move these initiatives forward over the last two years. While there are few providers who would say the rates are wholly competitive, they are significantly more competitive. This investment in our workforce is a significant step forward.

As we rebuild we are glad to see additional funds in the Governor's budget to clear the Section 29 waitlist over the next two years, and to help more people waiting for services with the highest need on Section 21. We of course would like to see funding included to address the growing waitlist for Sections 18 and 20 as well.

Funding for the start of the state's promising Lifespan Waiver in FY 25 is appreciated as well, and we look forward to working with the Department and other stakeholders to shape the services under this waiver as it is developed.

Lastly we look forward to further discussions with committee members and the Department regarding the need for a rate study for Section 21 Agency Home Supports and Section 21 and 29 Community Supports in 2024, as presented in LD 744 *Resolve, to Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to Perform Rate Studies and Rate Determinations for Providers of Certain Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder*, sponsored by Senator Baldacci, and ask that you work to include funding for long overdue rate study for these services in the final budget so that we can assure that the rates supporting thousands of Mainers with disabilities are sufficient to maintain access to the support that is needed in the home and community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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