



**Testimony of Laura Cordes
In Support of**

*LD 346 An Act to Clarify the Requirements for Family Caregivers and
LD 874 An Act to Address the Shortage of Direct Care Workers for Children with Disabilities in Maine*

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 29, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Laura Cordes. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Association for Community Service Providers (MACSP). MACSP is the statewide association of 85 individual, mission driven agencies providing person centered and individualized educational, vocational, residential and community supports, as well as specialized services and care to several thousand of Maine's 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.

I am writing on behalf of our members, in support of LD 346 and LD 874. Both bills would allow the parent of a child who is deemed eligible for in-home personal care services under the MaineCare program to register as a personal care agency and receive reimbursement for those services to a child. We wish to thank bill sponsors, Representative Fay and Senator Baldacci respectively for bringing these bills forward today.

The long waitlists for in-home and community-based supports which prevent access to critical medically necessary supports for children with disabilities are well known.

While we have general concerns about how the service would receive appropriate oversight, we believe more must be done to provide training, resources, and hope to families supporting children with disabilities while these waitlists exist.

Services, such as Rehabilitative and Community Support Services for Children with Cognitive Impairment and Function Limitations ("Section 28"), are medically necessary services designed to retain or improve the functional abilities of our Maine children which have been negatively impacted by the effects of cognitive and functional limitations. Services include problem solving activities in order to help the member develop and maintain skills and abilities necessary to manage his or her behavioral health treatment needs, learning the social skills and behaviors necessary to live with and interact with other community members and independently, and to build or maintain relationships with peers or

adults, learning the skills that will improve a member's self-awareness, environmental awareness, social awareness and support social integration, and learning awareness of and appropriate use of community services and resources.

These early intervention services are paramount. Research into the effects of early intervention for children with Autism is significant and positive. For example, in some cases, children have been able to develop and maintain verbal and gestural communication during the developmental period in a way that cannot be replicated in adulthood. Consequently, research has also shown that those that are able to communicate their decisions effectively have been shown to have improved mental health, reduced instances of abuse, and even increased longevity.

There are hundreds of children on waitlists for Section 28 and similar services living at home and unable to access this critical care. These are not children who are waiting to be authorized for services; these are children who have been determined eligible for the service and cannot find a provider with the capacity to help them.

Until we can address the access issues in children's services, we must offer Maine families the tools they need to support their children. By creating certification and funding pathways, we give our parents the opportunity to better support their children as caregivers and providers; we lessen the financial stress and prevent the inevitable choice facing families today to leave their children without appropriate care.

Thank you for your consideration. Please reach out with any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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