



WAYPOINT

The Power of Community

Written Testimony In Support of LD 744, An Act to Ensure Access to Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities by Requiring Rate Studies for Home and Community-based Services

April 7, 2023

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Jennifer Putnam, Executive Director at Waypoint (formerly Waban). Waypoint has been delivering services to children and adults with disabilities for over five decades. From special purpose preschool services to aging in place for our oldest adult members, we provide a wide range of caring and supportive services in Southern Maine.

The people who live in our group homes are those with the highest needs, whether behavioral, medical or both. For a wide variety of reasons, they are unable to live in the community without 24/7 supports. All require daily support from our hardworking DSP's, as well as clinical and behavioral management. As the public health emergency has drawn to a close, we thought staffing might begin to improve, but it did not. Our workforce was decimated during Covid and we lost many overworked staff and residential managers who just could not continue to work overtime hours that were never-ending. We changed our staffing model to allow for fewer workdays and put other measures into place, but fundamentally, the MaineCare Section 21 agency home support rate (Group home rate) needs to be studied and of course, increased as needed.

Waypoint has been a trusted provider in the community of Sanford for over 55 years. But last year, we were forced to make the difficult decision to close almost 35% of our homes, seven total, which affected 34 residents. Those homes, staff and services won't be coming back. This is the story you will hear over and over across the state of Maine.

You may recall that last year we received HCBS funds designated as bonuses for DSP's, along with one-time funds for group homes. This was helpful and lifted our dedicated DSP's up at a critical time. These funds are long gone, however, and in their wake are a raft of group home closures, disillusioned families and exhausted service providers. As a provider with 13 group homes left open, down from 20, I can tell you we can't wait years for a rate study and subsequent implementation.

We are not asking for money. We are asking for the care and attention that a rate study offers for people with the most severe needs. One point of consideration is the manner in which MaineCare Section 21 services are paid. Instead of a true per diem (daily) rate, the kind of rate paid to nursing homes and assisted living facilities, group home rates are calculated using a convoluted staffing hours and case mix model. Further, no one knows what the rate methodology is, ever since the since Maine changed the methodology without due notice last year. None of this is a prudent or sustainable service model.

Our agency's residential budget is half a million dollars in the red. We, and the community we serve, are lucky we have been able to bear these losses for this long. But we cannot continue to operate this way, no business or nonprofit could, or should.

Thank you for reading this testimony and I am available to clarify my testimony or answer any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Putnam

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