



WAYPOINT

The Power of Community

Testimony In Re: 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 13, 2023

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

I am Sally Milesen Director of Adult Services at Waypoint, formerly Waban. Waypoint has been delivering services to people with disabilities for 57 years. In the past few years, we have had the challenge every agency has experienced of finding people to do this important work. This challenge has forced us to close 7 of our homes which is 35% of our residential programs. The closing of these programs impacted 34 people. These 34 people represent just under half of our total census.

What this meant to one person was that the home she had lived in for many years was no longer her home. She is a person with a very strong need for routine and her entire life was upended. Nothing was familiar anymore. Her housemates were people she did not know. Many of the staff she saw every day were strange to her. The items she used most, like her recliner were in a strange place, and although we tried to keep her old routine as much as possible, she had to adjust to the routines of others now in her environment. This was frightening for her.

Another woman had to move twice because the home she went to first did not work for her and what she needed. This led to confusion, anxiety, and fear for her.

A third person who has significant staffing needs is looking to move out of Waypoint but has not found the right situation. In the meantime, he is not getting the staff support he needs above simply maintaining his safety in the program. This is not the quality of life people expect and we expect to provide.

The lack of people to hire has had a significant impact on the people who need our services. We can't do this work without people.

I am here today to urge this committee to support a rate study for Section 21 and 29 services in Maine and specifically group homes. We must do better in attracting talented and committed people to this work. A rate study would provide a realistic picture of what it costs to deliver these vital services to some of our most vulnerable people in Maine. Last year there was one-time money freed up for agencies to support the work to become compliant with the Home and Community Based Rule. This was not intended to support the on-going needs of the agencies to meet operating costs. We need a rate that will support, long term, the staff and increasing costs of doing business in Maine.

We are beyond agencies tightening our belts, reassessing our resources, and moving forward with what we have. Our staff deserve to be able to earn a living doing the work they enjoy. The need to be able to buy food, gas, and heat. Costs have gone up for all of us. The people who need our services deserve to be supported by people who are not overstressed because they have 3 jobs, or are not able to eat every day, or are on the verge of homelessness.

We are asking for the rate study to identify the actual costs of providing services today.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sally Milesen

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