

**Testimony in Support of**  
LD 1797, An Act Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Expanding  
Educational Opportunities and Providing Tax Credits

**May 2, 2023**

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Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Laurie Belden, a resident of Durham and the Executive Director of the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine (Alliance). The Alliance is a network of home health care, hospice, home care and personal care providers across our State delivering in-home care to older adults and disabled individuals of all ages, allowing them to stay in their home and community.

I'm here today to testify in support of **LD 1797, An Act Expand Maine's Health Care Workforce by Expanding Educational Opportunities and Providing Tax Credits** and I thank President Jackson for bringing this important legislation forward.

Hospitals, nursing homes, and home-based care are like a 3-legged stool in the state's healthcare landscape. Caring for Mainers in the home is essential to relieving the stress on facilities by keeping patients out of acute and long-term care settings or allowing them to return home after a facility stay. Since these three systems are so closely intertwined, it's important to ensure that each one is well-resourced, so that we don't put undue pressure on the other two.

Currently, all three systems – hospitals, nursing homes, and home care – are dealing with acute workforce shortages, and it is causing bottlenecks and hindering care across systems. For reference, see the March 5 article in the Portland Press Herald titled, [“With no place to go, some patients in Maine spend months in hospitals.”](#) In this article, the reporter details how staffing shortages at nursing homes are causing patients to stay in hospitals for months on end without hope of being transferred to a long-term care facility. The lack of adequate staffing in home care also contributes to this problem of long hospital stays.

Workforce shortages exist across health professions and throughout our healthcare delivery system, and if we don't take bold action to lessen the shortages, patient care will worsen. In home care, we are particularly concerned with shortages of nurses and direct care workers such as Certified Nursing Assistants.

In February, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services released their Second Annual Report on “Efforts and Progress in Implementing the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues.” This report indicates that one-third of MaineCare beneficiaries are only

receiving partial or no care at all under Section 19 (Home and Community Benefits for the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities); and, even more alarming is the nearly 50 percent of Section 96 beneficiaries (Private Duty Nursing and Personal Care Services) receiving partial or no care at all. This lack of access to care for MaineCare beneficiaries in need of home care services is directly attributable to workforce shortages in nursing and direct care.

The package of incentives offered in this legislation would go a long way toward addressing Maine's healthcare workforce challenges. The bill supports many tools in the toolbox – loan repayment for students and educators, funding for essential clinical training, and a new tax credit for nurses early on in their careers. Taken together, these opportunities and incentives will help us train additional healthcare professionals, and help us keep them here in Maine after their training is complete.

With proper staffing across systems, Mainers will be able to receive the high-quality care they need, whether it be at a hospital, a long-term care facility, or within their own home. LD 1797 will be an important step to help us get there and we urge you to support it.

Laurie Belden, Executive Director

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