



TESTIMONY

In Support of

Supplemental Budget CHANGE PACKAGE to LD 2214 “An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025”

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

April 1, 2024

Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

My name is Laura Harper. I am a Senior Associate at Moose Ridge Associates. I am here today to present testimony in support of this legislation on behalf of the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The Ombudsman Program is a nonprofit agency that provides statewide advocacy for older and disabled residents of nursing homes, residential care, assisted living and for recipients of home care services. Additionally, the program serves patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing the long-term services and supports they need when they are ready for discharge.

Initiative: Provides one-time funding in the Nursing Facilities program, Other Special Revenue Funds to establish the Nursing Facility Reform Transition Fund to fund components of nursing facility rates starting January 1, 2025, to support a complete transition to the new payment system by calendar year 2028. FEF 45,170,859 OSR \$27,614,927

We are pleased to provide testimony in support of the initiative that establishes the Nursing Facility Reform Transition Fund to support nursing facilities as MaineCare rate reform is implemented. We are hopeful that these funds will be helpful in preventing additional closures. The number of nursing facility closures has been of great concern to us particularly as residents and their family members have been impacted by these closures. Additionally, access to nursing facility care has been affected causing longer wait times for individuals in the community in need of care and those in hospitals waiting to be admitted into a nursing facility.

In every closure, Ombudsman Program staff have assisted residents and their families by providing information about their options and assisting residents through the transition to another facility. No matter how thoughtfully the closures are handled, the process of moving for older and disabled residents is very difficult. The same is true for family members. Our goal is always to assist residents in remaining as close to home as possible in a facility that can meet their needs. As more and more closures have occurred, this has become more challenging.

We are very encouraged that nursing facility rate reform is focused on promoting staffing levels that meet the needs of older and disabled residents served in nursing homes. Numerous studies link quality outcomes to adequate staffing. Nursing facility rate reform proposes rewarding nursing facilities that provide direct care staffing at 4.4 hours per resident day. If nursing facilities achieve this goal, it will do much to promote quality as well as aiding in staff retention. In our work with CNAs employed in nursing facilities, we often hear from them that adequate staffing levels are critical in providing quality care for residents.

We appreciate this investment in nursing facility care and in the Department's efforts with rate reform to promote quality outcomes for older and disabled residents in nursing facilities across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.