



Incorporated in 1967

Testimony of Rob Moran, Executive Director, Community Living Association, Houlton Maine
LD 209 An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

Neither for nor Against
January 23, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of both the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees.

My name is Rob Moran. I am the Executive Director, Community Living Association.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on the supplemental budget. I am submitting testimony to ask for your support to restore and allocate the funding needed for January 1, 2025, Maine Care service rate cost of living adjustments in the supplemental budget, *LD 209 An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund, and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025.*

Community Living Association in Houlton is an agency that was started in 1967 that serves people with disabilities. We provide Waiver residential facilities, ICF nursing residential, Community Supports, Work Supports, Shared Living and Supported Community Living. Community Living Association employs upwards of 180 employees and serves over 300 people from Bangor to Fort Kent.

For Community Living Association specifically, when we heard there would not be a COLA, we decided to stop any plans of potentially expanding our number of Residential Waiver Homes. The main reason we were thinking about adding a home was that we're doing better than we have staffing-wise than we have in a long time. We were at the early stages of possibly doing this. These homes are sorely needed here in the county. All the large agencies (Northern Maine General, Danforth Habilitations, Central Aroostook Association and us) have all reduced homes and bed capacity significantly in the last few years. In most cases this is due to the staffing crisis.

There have been times that residents have had to move to southern Maine due to their homes closing. Imagine being a person with disabilities having to move from one end of the state to the other due to an agency having to close a home due to a staffing shortage. Losing friends and any sense of community you may have had. This has happened. The decision to not fund a COLA makes it more likely that additional Aroostook homes close.

The lack of a COLA also means increased competition from retail and food businesses. Both of these business types can raise the price of their goods, in order to raise wages and stay well-

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staffed without losing profit. CLA and agencies like ours are completely dependent on rates as you all know.

At CLA, we're still planning on doing some type of raise for our front-line caregivers. Whatever we do will be less than it would be with a COLA that was funded. All our costs have increased during the past year, like every other business in the state. The difference is, as I mentioned before, most of them can raise their prices. In Houlton it's very competitive for staff. The work a caregiver does is much more difficult than many other jobs, as you all know. Personal care, giving medications, and dealing with difficult behaviors are all part of the work life of a Direct Support Professional along with many other challenges including an ever increasing/changing certification process.

We've had cost increases across the board with insurance costs, covid supplies (still a necessity), food and all other categories. We are also now hiring to fund the paid family leave act, which is in effect, a rate reduction.

I understand the state is in a budget crisis and know how difficult all your jobs must be. Disability services are also in crisis and are in a bit of a freefall. Restoring the COLA allowing to pay staff more and hopefully has a positive effect on the freefall, possibly stopping more home closures and consolidation.

Please restore the January 1, COLA for all Maine Care sites in the supplemental budget. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

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