

**Mailing Address:**  
P.O. Box 1280  
500-G  
Westbrook, ME 04098



**Street Address:**  
15 Saunders Way, Suite  
Westbrook, ME 04092

**Telephone:** (207) 523-5170 (V/TTY)

**Fax:** (207) 854-1787

### Testimony of Erin Martinez

*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 Erin Martinez. I am the Director of Case Management Services at GMS in Westbrook, Maine.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before the Committee to provide testimony on the supplemental budget. I am here today to ask for your support to restore and allocate the funding needed for January 1, 2025, MaineCare 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*.

GMS has been providing residential per diem, shared living, quarter hour in home, and case management support to adults with intellectual disabilities and/or autism for over 40 years. Although our residential services are primarily in the Portland area, our shared living services expand state wide and our case management services are provided to folks in 7 counties including Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Oxford and York. Currently, we provide case management services to over 90 people. Our case management team is made up of myself, a lead case manager, and two full time case managers.

I'm deeply concerned about the recent budgetary suspension of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for MaineCare rates. This decision profoundly impacts Mainers, including those who receive these essential services and the dedicated workers who provide their care and support. The suspension of COLA puts Maine's vital service system at significant risk, especially as the costs of living and minimum wage continue to rise.

Although I am lucky to have an exceptional team of case managers, I have, for over 3 years, had at least one open case management position open, often multiple. This has led to the normal 25-person case load to be increased to over 30 people and subsequently increased the burn out of my current team. This goes without the constant increase of responsibilities being expected of case managers. In addition, I have had to decrease our once abundant and thorough training to case managers to the basic requirements of the State.

Because of rates, I am unable to offer a pay rate much higher to them despite their required educational background of at least a bachelor's degree. Interestingly, DHHS is able to offer their case workers over \$30/hour for their service for the same required credentials, education, and experience. I have had a waitlist close to 30 people, with no movement, for over two years. I have had to stop offering this as an option to those in need of this service.

Recently, when a case manager left GMS to pursue another direction, I was asked by the person receiving services if I could keep them on my caseload permanently. I was left to explain to this person that I was not an option due to my other responsibilities to the GMS Case Management Department. This person voiced frustration, sadness, anger, uncertainty, and concern when they relayed their concerns over having not just lost the most recent case manager, but two others since July 2024. Three case managers, 6 months. I had told them I was fortunate enough to hire a new case manager. I told them I looked forward to introducing them to soon once their mandatory training was complete. This person went on to tell me how he didn't think this person would last long (referencing the last two case managers who worked with him for only 2-3 months each). When I tried to instill confidence in this case manager, the person told me they did not believe me.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated conversation. I have been forced to have this conversation on multiple occasions since being in this position with a person who has lost a case manager or the family who lost another support and advocate for their loved one. I don't anticipate this being the last time I have this conversation about the lack of a stability, long standing case manager.

***Please restore the January 1, COLA for all MaineCare rates in the supplemental budget.***

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Erin Martinez  
Director of Case Management Services  
GMS