



**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**

**Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees  
January 22, 2025**

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 Melinda Ward. I am the President & CEO of OHI in Bangor, Maine.

I appreciate the chance to provide feedback on the supplemental budget. I ask for your support to restore and allocate the funding needed for the January 1, 2025, MaineCare service rate cost of living adjustments in the supplemental budget.

OHI was incorporated in 1979, and we provide supports and services for over 400 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and mental illness in six counties. We currently employ approximately 260 employees, and we have nearly 50 job openings.

We are concerned with the recent budgetary suspension of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for MaineCare rates. This decision impacts those we support and our staff. We made the decision to push our organization into further deficit, by giving a 2.5% COLA to staff as of 12/30/24. Retaining our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) is necessary for continuing to serve the State's most vulnerable people. Being able to reach the 92.5% staffing requirement is nearly impossible with as many job openings as we have. Yes, we use overtime and supervisor time, to meet the State's requirements as best as we can. Realizing that is not sustainable, we gave the 2.5% and adjusted the base wage of our DSPs.

We rely on a reasonable rate of reimbursement and for the State to keep its promise of the COLA. The increased minimum wage and general cost of living increases put our supports and services at risk. We do not have the capacity to provide expanded or new services, even though we want to. We would appreciate your support to restore the January 1 COLA for all MaineCare rates in the supplemental budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Melinda Ward, President & CEO, OHI  
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