



Opportunity Enterprises, Inc.

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Testimony of Opportunity Enterprises

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

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 Christine Vincent. I am the CEO of Opportunity Enterprises.

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.*

Opportunity Enterprises has been proudly serving adults with intellectual disabilities and autism in up to 14 counties in Maine since 2008. We employ over 120 direct support professionals serving over 350 individuals each day.

We provide services under MaineCare sections 13, 21, & 29 services including shared living, home & community supports, group homes, case management, and employment services.

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.

As costs increase for our employees, we are finding that many are forced to take a 2nd or 3rd job, often limiting their ability to continue working at our programs to some degree or at all. People are able to find jobs in the for-profit sector that have better pay and benefits. This has caused a steady increase in our vacancies that we are finding more and more difficult to fill.

Because of these staffing challenges we have been forced to suspend new services and increases in current services. While encouraging individuals to look elsewhere they are returning stating that the same holds true with other agencies. This will inevitably cause longer and longer waitlists for individuals who desperately need these services.

We are already looking at reducing benefit costs including removing "non-essential" benefits (short-term disability, life insurance, etc.). This will surely prompt some employees to find jobs that offer a broader benefits package, thus making our already short-staffed situation more dire.

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.

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