

Testimony- Amanda Morrison

LD 210 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

**Joint Standing Committees on Appropriation and Financial Affairs Committee &
Health and Human Services Committee**

February 12, 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 Amanda Morrison. I am a Community Supports Supervisor, at OHI, and I reside in Brewer, ME. I appreciate the opportunity to come before the Committee to provide testimony on the biennial budget.

I am here today to ask for you to restore and allocate funding for cost of living adjustments for MaineCare services in the biennial budget, LD 210.

I have worked as a DSP for over 12 years and managed to work my way up into a management role now. Working with the people I support has changed my life for the better. I have learned more about myself from the people I support than I could have learned on my own. Being able to attempt to see the world through their eyes is so rewarding. To know what so many of them have been through and to see how resilient and still positive they remain is one of the most amazing things about them.

I'm deeply concerned about the suspension of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for MaineCare rates. This field is already so severely underpaid which creates a hardship with onboarding reliable DSP's and taking any further funds from this program will only negatively impact the people we support that have already been through so much. If we are unable to onboard and train new DSP's into the workforce the people we support will be in imminent danger as we have already determined they are unable to live without a certain level of support.

I will continue to work in direct care even without the COLA but it will cause me to have to work more hours just to survive which will also create an unhealthy work life balance leaving me more susceptible to illness, mental health issues and an overall lack of fulfillment within my own life due to not having the time I need to be able to bring my best self to work.

I know money is tight everywhere but at the end of the day please consider that the people we support did not pick this life. They were born into the hand they were dealt and every day strive to do the best they can do to contribute back to society in whatever way they can but without DSP's some would not ever have the ability to be able to do so. We as a state need to stop looking at social services as a department that can continue to take financial hits and instead realize the importance of what we do and why it is absolutely necessary.

Please restore COLAs for all MaineCare services in the biennial budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

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