

Brendan Davison
Bangor
LD 210

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

My name is Brendan Davison. I live in Bangor and I am a Mental Health Rehabilitation Technician and CRMA at OHI.

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 work in this field because I care deeply about helping people struggling with mental health challenges and recovery. I have been in the mental health field for the last year and a half, but I have been involved in mental health, neurodivergence, and recovery advocacy for many years, and I am also autistic myself. I work in a group home setting, helping clients reintegrate into the community. My responsibilities range from medication administration to facilitating appointments, to helping clients access resources in the community, all with the overarching goal of fostering autonomy and independence for our clients. The part of the work I am most passionate about is advocating for clients' needs, and encouraging and empowering clients to advocate for themselves.

However, this is no easy task. Recovery is often a difficult and complicated journey, and supporting clients on that journey is a stressful job, but the work we do is absolutely essential. Our field already struggles with chronic funding issues, understaffing, and high turnover rates, due in no small part to the inadequate compensation mental health workers receive. This has only been exacerbated by the rising costs of living, and many of us find ourselves living paycheck to paycheck. I have found myself taking on hours of overtime just to balance my checkbook at the end of the month, and even still I've been forced to put off necessary repairs and healthcare expenses simply because they were too far out of reach.

Without cost-of-living adjustments, Without COLAs, we risk losing more dedicated professionals, worsening burnout, and further straining a system that is already stretched too thin. This directly impacts the quality of care our clients receive, undermining their stability and progress. Our clients deserve consistent, high-quality care, and the professionals providing that care deserve wages that reflect both the difficulty and the importance of our work.

I urge you to restore cost-of-living adjustments for all MaineCare services in the biennial budget. Investing in this workforce is not just an investment in workers—it is an investment in the well-being and recovery of Maine's most vulnerable residents. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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