

COR Health Services Testimony on LD 210, the Governor's proposed Biennial Budget

February 12, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee and Health & Human Services Committee:

My name is Tammy Polakowski, and I serve as RN and ADON/Northern Region for COR Health Service. I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 210, the Governor's Biennial Budget proposal.

Specifically, I am concerned about the lack of funding for MaineCare rate increases for home care service and the lack of funding for MaineCare cost-of-living adjustments.

I feel as though I am in a unique position, having worked as a field nurse as well as Nurse Coordinator and Assistant Director of nursing. I am also an Alliance member. As a field nurse, I have worked with medically fragile, complex medical, and chronic conditions in the pediatric population which we serve. These conditions require ongoing medical monitoring, treatment, and support to the families. Without proper care, they are at risk for future illness and complications. The parents must provide routine care, medication administration, and travel to appointments. This can have a huge impact on the family. There is emotional and financial strain, and a decline in physical health of the parent. The risk is even higher in single parent homes. I carry a caseload in Northern Maine and frequently visit the homes of these pediatric clients. I hear of the struggles they have when they are not able to obtain in home nursing. Most of the parents are unable to work due to needing to be home to care for their sick child. This takes away any financial security they may have had. This can certainly have a domino effect on the State of Maine's economy with these parents needing to access other state programs. Not having nursing in the home can also put a strain on PCP offices, urgent care and emergency Depts, and inpatient facilities. Home care is clearly the most cost effective as well as the safest for these clients. Inpatient stays after surgical procedures are drastically reduced when there is nursing in the home.

There is an urgent need for RN staffing in the State of Maine. We are unable to offer a pay rate that can compete with inpatient facilities. The reimbursement rates that we have are outdated and simply not enough to hire staff for the large amount of unstaffed hours we have. I urge you to consider MaineCare rate increases for home health services in Maine, specifically pediatric in home nursing. Without the rate increases we will be unable to hire nurses that are much needed across the state. For the nurses we have on staff, without the COLA that we were expecting, we will be unable to retain the

staff we have due to only being able to offer minimal annual pay increases. It is much appreciated that the proposed budget has an investment that stabilizes the Mainecare program, but in order for homecare services in the State of Maine to move forward, it is crucial that rate increases and COLA are included in the biennial budget

Thank you,

Tammy Polakowski RN ADON/Northern Region

COR Health Services

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