

COR Health 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 Parame Limvattanalert and I serve as Assistant Director of Nursing Southern Region of COR Health Services. I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 210, the Governor's Biennial Budget proposal.

Specifically, I am concerned about the negative impact the proposed budget cuts will have on home care, hospice, and personal care providers.

These services are vital for allowing older adults and children with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities. However, the proposed budget cuts funding for these critical services, which will drastically reduce access to care for our most vulnerable populations. These cuts will also place additional strain on family caregivers and threaten the stability of the home care workforce.

Current wages for nurses and home care providers have fallen drastically behind market rates due to low MaineCare reimbursement rates. Home care agencies are struggling to compete with other healthcare providers in hiring enough nurses. For many of our member agencies, the patients they serve are almost entirely MaineCare recipients who rely solely on these rates. Unfortunately, there are no other payers to make up for the inadequacy of MaineCare reimbursement. As a result, many patients are receiving far fewer hours of nursing services than they need or are approved for.

In 2024, our agency had 63 clients on the nursing waitlist, but we were only able to provide services to 17% of them due to a lack of staffing. Tragically, one client passed away while waiting to receive nursing services. Additionally, several of our new hires and existing nurses accepted jobs in hospital settings, a direct result of low reimbursement rates.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for home care, hospice, and personal care workers. These workers are underpaid, and without a COLA, they will continue to face financial hardship, worsening the staffing crisis and further diminishing the quality of care provided.

I urge you to oppose LD 210 in its current form, ensure sufficient funding for home care and hospice services, and include a COLA to support these dedicated workers. We

must prioritize these services to support our most vulnerable residents and the workforce that makes this care possible.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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