

John Fletcher II
TESTIMONY
FEBRUARY 11, 2025

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 John Fletcher II. I am the Rehabilitation Technician/DSP, at OHI, Inc., and I reside in Kenduskeag. I appreciate the opportunity to come before the Committee to provide testimony on the biennial budget. I am here today to ask you to restore and allocate funding for cost-of-living adjustments for Maine Care services in the biennial budget, LD 210.

I have dedicated more than 14 years to support individuals with mental health and intellectual disabilities and it is the most rewarding experience in my life. I get to work with an amazing group of coworkers who enjoy their job and are an important part of the individual's lives in teaching and learning everyday skills, as well as enjoying coming to their home and talking with them, joking with them and bringing a smile to their faces. I get to teach them things and they do the same for me.

I'm deeply concerned about the suspension of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for Maine Care rates. The economy in the state of Maine is terrible to begin with, but with this supposed cut could start us on the path to another depression. I am surviving paycheck to paycheck and cannot afford to any pay cut at this point. With the cost of all utilities, especially electricity and heating oil, and struggling to afford groceries and gas to get to work. I can't believe it costs almost \$11 for an 18-pack of eggs now. I just bought a newer car last year and I am fixed in at \$380 a month for the next 7 years. I love the work I do, but I don't know if I could continue to do the work I do for less money. I would have to take on a second job or attempt to work tons of overtime to manage to survive. That is just the

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concern for me. I can't begin to imagine how the individuals supported feel. I feel that they don't receive the help they need now, and you are considering cutting more of their help. There are individuals who are unable to do things for themselves and depend on the staff around them. I deal with their fears and concerns of being forced out of the home and sent back to the hospital or put in jail every day because of voices in their heads telling them to worry about that and you are considering cutting the help they desperately need, justifying their concerns. Do you have friends or family that depend on the care you want to cut? How would you handle it if you did? Does the health of an individual with mental health and intellectual disabilities mean less than other people? Ask yourself those questions and reflect on that.

I have family with downs syndrome, autism, bipolar, schizophrenia and Alzheimer and dementia. I will never love them or support them any different and would go to war to secure the help they need. Humanity and caring for people should never be a problem. Please restore COLAs for all Maine Care 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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