



TESTIMONY

LD 210, HPO 132: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 20, 2026, and June 30, 2027

Stephanie Hatcher, Direct Support Professional (DSP) on Behalf of

The Direct Care and Support Professional Advisory Council

February 12, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Stephanie Hatcher. I am a DSP with over 28 Years of experience in providing direct support to individuals with Intellectual Disabilities. I am a member of the Direct Care and Support Professional Advisory Council and the Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee. After many years of providing direct support, I now serve as a Trainer for other DSPs.

I started work in this field in 1993. My mother began working in direct care support when I was two years old. Since I was seven, I knew I wanted to work in this field in some capacity. I love what I do because it helps others to grow in life and heart.

I eventually became a staff trainer. Being a voice for those that work so hard day in and day out with little recognition is a key component of the work that I do. It is what I believe in. It is what I do. It is what I am passionate about.

Unfortunately, wages do not reflect the hard work, dedication and the skill that these essential jobs require. Repeatedly, I see staff being forced to work two and sometimes three jobs to make ends meet.

Low wages contribute to challenges in recruitment and retention of direct care support staff. Direct care and support professionals serve thousands of older and disabled Mainers who need care and support rely on a strong and stable workforce.

We urge you to support funding for COLA for providers as well as the provision that requires reimbursement of 125% of minimum wage.

Thank you for your consideration!