

Vincent Renteria
Bangor
LD 210

Testimony Vincent Renteria SCCM, OHILD 210 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027 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 Vincent Renteria. I am the Senior Community Case Manager, at OHI, and I reside in Carmel, Maine.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before the Committee to provide testimony on the biennial budget.

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 have worked in disability support services for 12 years first as a Direct Support Professional and as a Case

Manager for the passed 9 years, though I still do DSP work as needed, so It's like I have two jobs. The most valuable or rewarding part of my job is connecting the members I serve with the supports and services that will ensure safety, security, choice and quality of life. I do this work to feed my family and help the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our society have a chance to live their best lives.

I'm deeply concerned about the suspension of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for MaineCare rates.

I will not be able to afford food for the table, electricity for power, oil for heat, funds for day care, gas for my car, household goods, clothes, gifts for holidays, celebrations or time away from work. Without adjustments and increases my family and the members we support get suffer. Without adjustments and increases our communities will become poorer and suffer even more. Without adjustments and increases our workforce will continue to diminish to the point were there will be more closures and more people in need left with no one to help. Who will bathe, dress, pass medications, feed, go to Medical appointments and monitor health and safety? There is a major staffing crisis and I actions such as this will only add to the crisis. I do not want to work two jobs forever, nor should I be expected to. We should be doing more than just surviving, but for that to happen we need increases in our rates to match the current zeitgeist.

I support an older lady who was struggling to live on her own, neglecting her health and safety on a daily basis. With

case management I was able to connect her with a home support agency with supportive staff that helped her make her placement a success. She remains in her home, safe and now has the support staff to ensure her health and safety. Another member I support has lived with their shared living provider for over 15 years but increased medical needs made it difficult to continue supporting him without additional staff support. Thanks to the work we did we were able to secure additional hours to add a Direct Support Professional to help in the home, ensuring that the member was able to stay where they have been for over a decade. Support staff are on the front lines, caring and keeping people safe, we cannot afford to to damage our workforce further.

Please restore COLAs for all MaineCare services in the biennial budget. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please contact me with any questions you may have. Vincent Renteria SCCM, OHI207-949-1036