

Public Hearing - 4/1/2025

L.D. 979 Bill “Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 113: Assisted Housing Programs Licensing Rule, a Late-filed Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Health and Human Services” (HP0639)

Good day,

My name is Leann Sebrey RN, and I have dedicated my career to providing compassionate, high-quality healthcare for Maine’s most vulnerable individuals. As a Chief Operating Officer, I have seen firsthand the critical role that assisted living communities play in supporting older adults and individuals living with dementia. I am here today to express my strong opposition to the proposed regulatory changes, which are unreferenced, based on anecdotal evidence, and pose a significant threat to access to care, the sustainability of assisted living communities, and the overall health of our population.

These regulatory changes amount to unfunded mandates—placing additional burdens on providers without providing the necessary financial resources to implement them. Maine already faces a Medicaid reimbursement gap of \$118 million, leaving many providers struggling to cover the actual costs of care. Further regulatory requirements without corresponding funding will force many facilities to limit admissions, reduce services, or, in some cases, close their doors entirely.

### **Impact on Population Health & the Continuum of Care**

The consequences of these regulations extend beyond assisted living communities; they will disrupt the entire healthcare continuum, creating a domino effect that will negatively impact population health across Maine.

#### **1. Increased Emergency Department & Hospital Utilization**

- Without adequate assisted living options, more individuals will remain in hospitals long after they are medically stable, driving up costs and reducing bed availability for acutely ill patients. This will further burden acute care facilities already reducing capacity or considering closure.
- Individuals with chronic conditions and cognitive impairments who could be managed in assisted living will instead be forced into crisis situations, leading to more frequent emergency department visits and hospital admissions.

#### **2. Increased Demand for Higher-Cost Institutional Care**

- Many residents in assisted living communities receive services that allow them to delay or avoid higher levels of care, such as skilled nursing or long-term hospitalization. If access

is restricted, more individuals will be prematurely placed in nursing homes, increasing strain on a sector already struggling with workforce shortages and financial instability.

- This shift will further drive-up Medicaid spending, as nursing home care is significantly more expensive than assisted living services.

### **3. Worsening Health Outcomes & Higher Mortality Rates**

- Assisted living provides a crucial middle ground between independent living and full-time institutional care, ensuring that residents receive appropriate support while maintaining their dignity and independence. Restricting access will lead to increased social isolation, malnutrition, medication mismanagement, and mental health deterioration which research proves contribute to higher mortality rates.
- Family caregivers, already stretched thin, will face greater burdens, leading to increased stress-related health issues and financial strain on working families.

### **4. Undermining Community-Based Care Models**

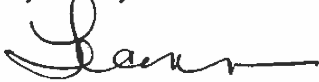
- Maine has made progress in shifting toward community-based care models that allow individuals to age in place while receiving necessary support. These regulatory changes will reverse that progress by making it more difficult for assisted living providers to operate, pushing more residents into institutional settings and away from their communities.

### **A Call for Collaborative, Evidence-Based Reform**

If the goal of these regulations is to improve care quality and safety, they must be developed in collaboration with healthcare providers, backed by data, and accompanied by adequate funding. Without this, they serve only to limit access, increase costs, and worsen health disparities across our state.

I urge policymakers to reconsider these regulatory changes and work with stakeholders to create a sustainable, evidence-based path forward—one that strengthens, rather than undermines, Maine's assisted living system and broader continuum of care.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Submitted by Leann Sebrey, RN, MSN-NEL,  
Chief Operating Officer, Woodlands Senior Living

108 Anthony Ave. Augusta, Maine 04330

207-542-0770

[lsebrey@woodlandsmaine.com](mailto:lsebrey@woodlandsmaine.com)