



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

LD 977; Resolve, Requiring the Maine Health Data Organization to Develop a Plan for Measuring Gaps in Home and Community-based Services

Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
Before the Committee on Health and Human Services
April 9th, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Service, my name is Nicole Marchesi. I am the Public Policy Advocate for the Maine-Long Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The Ombudsman Program provides statewide advocacy for older and disabled residents in nursing homes, assisted living and residential care and for recipients of home care and participants in adult day programs. Additionally, we assist patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing the long-term services and supports they need when they are ready for discharge.

We are pleased to provide testimony in support of LD 977; Resolve, Requiring the Maine Health Data Organization to Develop a Plan for Measuring Gaps in Home and Community-based Services. This resolve requires the Maine Health Data Organization to develop a plan for annual measurements of the gap between authorized care and the services provided for home and community-based services. The plan ensures that the measures meet the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services data requirements. It is crucial that the department collect and provide this data to policy makers as well as the public so that we can work together to put resources where they need to go, keeping people safe in their community setting.

Currently, the department does post public quarterly data on wait list numbers for those home care programs that do have a wait list to enroll (such as section 18 & section 20). However, this data does not bring light to how many people are enrolled in a home care program and are not receiving the hours in their care plan. This data should be just as transparent and publicly shared as the quarterly wait list data for program enrollment.

LTCOP receives hundreds of calls from home care consumers each year. The number one home care related complaint falls into the category of "access to services". Consumers and families call LTCOP in crisis due to their plan of care not being able to be staffed. Many families are unaware of the systemic lack of staffing in our state and are shocked once their loved one comes on program and their home care hours can't be staffed. Consumers and families need access to this information when trying to make informed decisions about whether they can safely live at home by accessing one of these programs.

Understanding which home care programs are struggling most, the type of staffing, and the locations where staffing can't be found is crucial in understanding where Maine needs to focus its resources. This data would allow policy leaders and advocates to know where rate reform is needed most. It would also help the workforce enhancement and retention efforts understand what type of direct care workforce needs the most support.

As advocates for home care consumers, we need access to care gap data. LTCOP needs to understand the scope of these gaps to effectively advocate both on a case-by-case base, as well as the systemic level.

Thank you for your consideration