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President of the Senate

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***Testimony of Senate President Mattie Daughtry presenting
LD 1237, “An Act to Support Adult Family Care Homes and Residential Care Facilities That Are
Small or Located in Rural and Isolated Areas of the State”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services***

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly serve as President of the Maine State Senate, where I am honored to represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island and part of Yarmouth. Today, I stand before you to speak in strong support of LD 1237, “An Act to Support Adult Family Care Homes and Residential Care Facilities That Are Small or Located in Rural and Isolated Areas of the State,” a crucial piece of legislation sponsored by my esteemed colleague, Representative Christina Mitchell.

Representative Mitchell and I both have the honor of representing the beautiful island of Chebeague in Casco Bay, where we have witnessed firsthand the unique challenges that our small and rural communities face, particularly regarding access to quality care for our elders and individuals with disabilities.

Just this week, I was out on Chebeague talking to folks about their local assisted living facility, Island Commons. During my visit, I was inspired by the deep sense of community and commitment the residents and staff possess for one another. Island Commons embodies the values we hold dear in our close-knit island community—a place where personalized care, companionship, and shared meals create a nurturing environment for our seniors. As one of only a few facilities of its kind in the area, Island Commons plays a vital role in ensuring that island elders receive the care they deserve.

However, it is important to recognize the challenges that also accompany this invaluable service. With only seven residents living at Island Commons, the facility faces a significant burden due to its small size, especially in meeting operational costs and staffing requirements. Additionally, being an island facility presents unique logistical needs; the reliance on ferry transport adds complexity to staffing and accessing resources. Supporting this facility and others like it is about more than just healthcare—it's about preserving the fabric of our rural communities.

The proposed bill aims to provide a much-needed supplemental payment of 10% to the MaineCare rates for facilities with fewer than 10 beds or those 35 miles away from the nearest similar facility. By doing so, we can help alleviate some of the financial pressures on facilities like Island Commons, enabling them to continue providing exceptional care and support to those who rely on their services.

The requirement for the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate the potential impacts of proposed rule changes on long-term care facilities in small and rural areas is a vital step toward understanding and addressing the unique needs of our communities. It is essential that we protect the safety and quality of services provided to our elders and disabled adults, ensuring that facilities can continue to thrive despite the unique challenges they face due to living in rural and hard to reach places.

I ask that this committee support this important legislation. By investing in our small and rural care facilities, we are investing in the well-being of our elders, the strength of our communities, and the values that bind us together.

Thank you for your attention, and thank you to Rep. Christina Mitchell for championing this critical bill.