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April 23, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Chair  
Representative Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1613 – *An Act to Establish Maine's Care Force to Address the State's Health Care Crisis (Emergency)*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 1613 – *An Act to Establish Maine's Care Force to Address the State's Health Care Crisis*.

The bill would establish Maine's Care Force, a program within the Department to develop and deliver essential support worker (ESW) training and certification programs; provide health care, housing and subsistence for ESWs; coordinate placement of ESWs for employment in private homes, facilities and community-based settings in underserved areas based on community need; provide ongoing mentorship and mental health resources to ESWs; and coordinate with placement sites to provide compensation to participating ESWs for services.

While we applaud the bill's intention to ensure a robust ESW workforce, as drafted, the bill raises a number of concerns. . First, the Department does not typically develop and deliver training programs, so there would be a considerable time, work, and cost to set up the infrastructure to take on that role and run such a program. Additionally, the relationship between the Department, the ESWs, and the providers/facilities at which the ESWs would work is unclear (e.g., are the ESWs employed by the Department or the providers/facilities?), but in either case, if the Department were to take on a portion or all of the costs associated with ESWs delivering care, the Department would need to revise rates in accordance with 22 MRS 3173-J for many the sections of the MaineCare Benefits Manual whose rates already include ESW costs. The Department would need to implement a system to "coordinate placement of ESW for employment" and "coordinate with placement sites to provide compensation to participants for services." Further, if the ESWs were actually paid by the state and thus state employees, we would need to determine if there were CMS implications around meeting requirements to claim federal match for their time.

The Department would be happy to provide additional information and further discuss the challenges associated with LD 1613 and our opposition to moving forward with the bill. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Probert".

Michelle Probert  
Director

Office of MaineCare Services  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services