

Testimony of Andrew Taranko

In Support of:

LD 1509 Resolve, to Maintain Access to Home and Community-based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder or Brain Injury.

April 23, 2025

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 1509.

My name is Andrew Taranko, I am the State Director for Living Innovations; a non-profit organization serving children and adults with developmental disabilities and autism in their homes and communities across all sixteen (16) counties in Maine. Living Innovations staff and home providers support over 1300 children and adults (MaineCare Members) to live their best lives every day in the Maine community that they choose. We provide community-based services like Shared Living, Home and Community Supports, Case Management and Employment Services funded through the following MaineCare Sections: 21, 29, 28, 20 and 13 and Vocational Rehabilitation.

I also serve as Board President of the Maine Association for Community Service Providers (MACSP). MACSP represents nearly one hundred agencies that deliver person-centered educational, vocational, residential, and community supports, as well as specialized services and care to a diverse population of Maine children and adults who have either intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or brain injuries, so that they may live full and meaningful lives in the community. Our members provide HCBS services to over 5,000 adults across the state with nearly 9,000 direct support professionals (DSPs) funded by MaineCare waivers.

With increasing costs and increasing expectations for providing stable and safe services for people with disabilities to access we have been waiting patiently for updated services and rates. Without new rates it is getting harder to implement services that are robust, integrated and person-centered. In good faith, providers have waited their turn and supported the new framework for services through the Lifespan Waiver. We were expecting on January 1st, 2025 to have cost of living adjustments while we patiently waited for the rate study to be completed. Now, we will be waiting again for the department to merge the current services with the new Lifespan Waiver implementation.

We are one of the many agencies who put forth the effort to participate in Lifespan Waiver Stakeholder work groups, stakeholder feedback sessions, attend public hearings, respond to draft proposals, and complete the Rate Study for the Office of MaineCare Services (OMS). We are concerned with all this work and the lack of an implementation plan that supports services.

As an update, the draft rates for Sections 18, 20, 21, and 29 along with the proposed rates for the new Lifespan Waiver services were released last week. We are hopeful that our

assessment of these rate will lead to a positive result. For now, we have not had the time to thoroughly assess the rates to make any judgement call. In the meantime, what we need is a plan that includes an understanding of when these rates will be implemented. Furthermore, we all need to know when the service descriptions for any current service will be released.

I ask for your support of LD 1509, along with any amendments that further clarify a plan to support the care and services for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Andrew Taranko,
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