

David Motel

Testimony in Support of LD 1566 An Act to Provide Compensation to Individuals with Lived Experience Serving on Advisory Boards, Commissions, Councils and Similar Groups

Date: 4/28/2025

To: The Committee On State And Local Government

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is David Motel, and I am [a resident of Waterville/ a person with lived experience related to this bill / an advocate for my son]. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1566, which would require compensation for individuals who share their lived experiences to inform public policy.

For too long, individuals with lived experience have been asked to show up—to share deeply personal stories, give feedback, serve on panels, or advise on policies—with little or no compensation. Yet our perspectives are vital. They provide real-world insights that professionals and systems often overlook. This bill acknowledges a fundamental truth: Lived experience is expertise. And expertise deserves to be paid.

I advocate for my son, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of two. Since then, I've navigated a complex system of supports, from Child Development Services during the pandemic, to working through the medical model for speech and occupational therapy with help from the Katie Beckett waiver—because I earned just enough to miss qualifying for MaineCare but not enough to afford private insurance coverage. I gained valuable experience through his enrollment at Woodfords, where he received intensive services, and later at Educare (Headstart), before moving into public school with the tools and support he needed to thrive. Each step taught me lessons about persistence, advocacy, and the gaps that still exist in the system.

I have been asked to share our journey several times because of the breadth of knowledge I bring—but doing so costs me. I am currently a Public Defense worker, and each time I advocate publicly, I am sacrificing my time, wages, and emotional energy. Sharing my experience is important, but it must be recognized as real labor. If I'm expected to empower other families while balancing my professional responsibilities and personal advocacy, it is only fair to request compensation for the experience and effort that I bring to the table.

This bill sets a clear standard: if you are asking for our time, our insight, and our vulnerability, you must also offer fair compensation. This is not only about equity—it's about sustainability. Many of us are navigating difficult circumstances. Compensation makes it possible for us to

keep showing up, and it sends a powerful message that our knowledge is just as valuable as any professional credential.

I urge you to support LD 1566. Valuing lived experience includes valuing our time, our expertise, and our labor. This bill helps create more equitable, inclusive, and effective systems—and it starts by paying people for what they know.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
David Motel
Waterville, Maine