

Darcy Williams
Parent Ambassador
LD 1566

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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 Salsbury, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Darcy Williams, and I am a resident of Kennebec County, a person with lived experience related to this bill, and an advocate for children and families. 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 have taken the time to provide written testimony before and was minimally compensated. There are so many issues impacting children and families that I am extremely passionate about and feel the intense desire to speak out about such as—funding for programs vital to the well-being of families like head start, child care incentives, and state programs that help bridge the gap when families struggle.

I was once a single mother and didn't have the natural supports I needed. I relied on certain programs and child care that was safe in order to provide a home for my daughter and to be a contributing member of society at the same time. Now, I've raised three children who make me very proud as young adults, and I've been raising my seven year old nephew since he was a year old. I once again found myself in a situation where some of the programs that always seem to be at risk were vital to my family so that we could care for a child who had a very difficult beginning and also remain stable financially by being able to access childcare and other programs for families like ours.

This is when I began to share my stories and learn to advocate. I only wish I could do so more and the barrier most often is losing income due to having to take time off for work. Lived experience like mine and so many others should be the driving force behind policies and we must make it possible for every single person to share their story without the financial barrier.

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,

Darcy E. Williams
South China, Kennebec County