

Raychel Ward
Livermore Falls
LD 1566

Senator Baldacci, Rep Salisbury and members of the committee,

Thank you for being here and being open minded today. My name is Raychel Ward and I am a Maine State Parent Ambassador. Beyond being a Parent Ambassador I am a member of the board at Promise Early Education, Be Fierce Women's self defense and a Girl Scout Troop Leader. Not to boast but I'm deeply intertwined to my community.

That being said, often at board meetings, events I'm asked to share my story and experiences I am often the only one at the table or event not being paid or compensated in some way to be there. This happens on a state level too. However without my lived experience an important opinion, experience, world view or suggestion wouldn't be available. Without that opinion you would see impractical policies passed at Headstart, a self defense program that is focused on reactivity vs. anticipating and how to see the red flags or build mental strength in the sight of adversity. What would we see on a state level if people were not volunteering their lived experience?

I am asking you to vote ought to pass because my lived experience has value and for me to step away from my job, children and personal agenda to make time to share those valuable experiences has an unseen cost.

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,
Raychel Ward
District 17