



## Testimony of Brenda Peluso on Behalf of Maine's Essential Care & Support Workforce Partnership

Submitted on May 2, 2025

### Testimony in Support of LD 1720: An Act Regarding Benefits and Training for Long-term Care Workers

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Brenda Peluso, and I am the coordinator for [Maine's Essential Care & Support Workforce Partnership](#), a broad coalition of employers, workers, and concerned individuals working to increase access to quality direct care and support in Maine by changing the way we value workers and the work they do.

Over the past several years, the Partnership has been working on a number of fronts to shrink the workforce shortage that is costing us dearly - in our physical, mental, and economic well being. The provisions in this bill align well with solutions our comprehensive stakeholder process has prioritized: A better set of benefits for the workers and resources for employers to better meet the training needs of new workers.

While we support all the elements included in LD 1720, we urge you to consider the following:

- Expand the scope of this bill to include all Essential Support Workers as defined in [MSRA Title 22, §7401, sub-§3](#). As written, this bill only includes those Essential Support Workers who are employed in residential care facilities. Home and Community Based Essential Support Workers ensure people can remain in their homes as long as possible - where they prefer to be - where they do best - and where their care costs the least. More importantly, the lack of available staffed beds in Maine's care facilities makes it more important than ever to keep people safely at home. For years this Committee urged providers across the continuum to work together to make all services stronger. This bill should be amended to include workers who care for people in the community.
- Ensure the good work Maine's Department of Health & Human Services and Department of Labor are doing to recruit, train, and support workers who are nonnative English speakers is enhanced by any resulting legislation. For example: The soon-to-be rolled out core

curriculum for Direct Service Workers is translated into the five (5) most common languages allowing nonnative English speakers to learn and be assessed in their native language.

Sadly, because of the shortage in the Essential Support Workforce, many Maine people who need assistance with activities of daily living are facing serious challenges, including worsened physical and mental health, higher risk of falls and injuries, hospitalization, neglect, institutionalization, and even homelessness and death. This bill could be an important piece of policy in our efforts to address this workforce crisis.

Thank you for all your careful consideration of the priorities in front of you. Our partnership is committed to serving as a trusted resource on this critical workforce.

Brenda Peluso

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<https://essentialworkforce.org/>

For more information and sources, please see

- “Speaker Fecteau Submits Bill to Address Maine’s Direct Care Workforce Shortage”, Maine’s Essential Care & Support Workforce Partnership, January 2025, <https://essentialworkforce.org/2025/01/speaker-fecteau-submits-bill-to-address-maines-direct-care-workforce-shortage/>
- “Closing the Gap: Maine’s Direct Care Shortage and Solutions to Fix It,” MECEP, June 2024, <https://essentialworkforce.org/2024/06/the-partnership-launches-its-second-report/>
- “The High Cost of Undervaluing Direct Care Work,” MECEP, April 2023, <https://essentialworkforce.org/2023/04/the-high-cost-of-undervaluing-direct-care-work-2/>