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My name is Katelyn Kiermaier and I am the Clinic Manager at Pediatric Development Center. We have two clinic locations, Westbrook and Saco. I am also an occupational therapist. I am writing today in strong support of L.D. 1785, "An Act to Encourage Competition by Requiring Independent Health Care Provider Cost-of-living Adjustments in Health Insurance Contracts."

As a provider on the frontlines of outpatient care for children with complex needs, I want to thank you for recognizing the administrative and financial challenges we face. Between rising wages, increasing regulatory requirements, and stagnant reimbursement rates from commercial insurance companies, delivering high-quality services sustainably has become increasingly difficult.

In my role as Clinic Manager, unfortunately I frequently see occupational therapists in our setting leaving to go to other settings with higher reimbursement rates. It is very challenging for us to offer competitive salary or wages to our therapists to help retain quality therapists, which ultimately impacts having a high level of care for our clients. Frequent turnover is hard on our clients and their families. The owner of PDC, Jillian O'Brien, is no longer able to offer yearly raises for our staff because insurance reimbursement rates do not increase. In this economy, costs of living in Maine continue to increase. Especially in the greater Portland area where we are located, it is very challenging to make ends meet for our therapists, and having a cost of living raise increase would be so helpful for our therapists to have better quality of life. I also believe this would help our clinic to be more competitive with other practice settings, leading to less turnover and more quality therapy services for the populations we serve.

As an occupational therapist who values living in Maine and being a part of this vibrant community, I thank you for consideration in reading this.