



## **LD 1720 An Act Regarding Benefits and Training for Long-Term Care Workers**

### **Testimony In Support**

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

May 2, 2025

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Myer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Nicole Marchesi; I am the Public Policy Advocate for the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. I am submitting testimony in support of this legislation on behalf of the Direct Care and Support Professional Advisory Council.

Council members are employed as direct care and support professionals across the continuum of long-term services and supports. Some of our members are new Mainers who have made a very successful transition into employment in this essential workforce. Council members believe that every effort should be made to encourage new Mainers to enter direct care and support employment.

#### Training for Certified Nursing Assistants and Direct Care Workers

The workforce shortage across the state significantly impacts access to care both in nursing homes and PNMI, every effort should be made to assure that CNA and direct care worker training reimbursement is adequate to encourage providers to make this training readily available. The Maine Health Care Association reports that its members are concerned that reimbursement does not adequately cover the cost of training and as such is a barrier to providing training.

Adequate reimbursement and access to training would encourage positive results in the efforts of recruitment and retention. This bill would also support other efforts to recruit direct care and support professionals that have been implemented by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor, including the Caring for ME and Careers with Purpose Campaigns.

#### Providing the written Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) exam in additional languages

The Direct Care and Support Professional Advisory Council agrees providing the written CNA exam in additional languages would be a critical step to limiting a potential barrier of bringing new Mainers into the workforce. Providing additional languages proposed in this legislation such as French, Spanish, Chinese and Filipino, is an important measure to support New Mainers. New Mainers with an interest in caregiving as well as those with caregiving experience will benefit from being able to take the test in their native language if they wish to do so. As a state we need to encourage recruitment of workers and allowing a space for New Mainers to feel comfortable entering this essential work.

#### Interpretive Services

Communication between staff and residents has a direct impact on quality of care and quality of life for residents. It is critical that staff understand the needs and wishes of residents through effective communication. Interpretive Services must be readily available to staff and residents. We know that in some long-term care facilities language barriers have been a challenge impacting retention of staff as well as quality of care.

#### English as a Second Language Training

New Mainers who are employed as direct care and support professional tell us that training support for English language proficiency is critical in assisting them in being successful in their jobs in providing care to residents. In our meetings with these staff, we have heard consistently that this is a pressing need. We urge support for this training.

Thank you for your consideration.