



53 Baxter Boulevard, Suite 202 | Portland, ME 04101
Phone: 866-554-5380 | Fax: 207-775-5727 | TTY: 877-434-7598
aarp.org/me | me@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmaine
facebook.com/aarpmaine | instagram.com/aarpme

February 12, 2025

AARP Maine Testimony in Opposition to LD 210 – Part UU

Greetings Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Bridget Quinn, Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. We are also testifying as and as a member of Maine's Essential Care & Support Workforce Partnership - a voluntary partnership working to equip Maine with a strong and supported direct care workforce. Today I am testifying in opposition to language included in part UU of LD 210 and asking for additional allocations to be made to adequately cover the needs of MaineCare.

We appreciate the work the Legislature and the State have done to protect MaineCare. However, the proposed language in part UU takes a step backwards from policy that has supported our essential direct care workforce. Workers providing long-term care are in short supply and shortages are only expected to worsen as our state's population gets older.

Direct service workers provide most paid long-term care services. Yet, people who can afford home-care services often have difficulty locating competent, trained people to do the job.

Non-competitive wages¹ are a major factor in inhibiting direct care worker recruitment and retention. The median direct care worker wage² of \$15.43/hour in 2022 placed more than 39% of the direct care workforce in or near the federal poverty level. A particular challenge is the similarity of wages between physically and emotionally demanding direct care work and less challenging employment alternatives available in the retail and food service industries.

¹ <https://policybook.aarp.org/policy-book/long-term-services-and-supports>

² <https://www.phinational.org/policy-research/key-facts-faq/>

A July 2024 survey of Maine residents age 45 and older showed that 96% of Mainers feel that it's important to them to be able to remain in their home as they get older. In addition, 86% of those surveyed said that they are concerned about not have long-term care services available to them when it is needed. Family caregivers, friends, and an adequately paid direct care workforce will all play an important role in allowing that to happen.

The language included in part UU goes against the principles I have just shared and in fact threatens them. The suggested language changes in section UU, combined with insufficient funding in the MaineCare budget to implement the scheduled Cost Of Living Adjustments (COLAS), undermines the modest but critical progress we've made. We cannot afford to move backward.

In order to have a Maine where people are able to choose how they live as they age, we must prioritize building a substantial direct care workforce and having an adequately funded MaineCare program. AARP Maine urges these committees to reject proposed language changes in Part UU and appropriate sufficient funds to ensure MaineCare can meet the growing demand for direct care. We must support Mainers who wish to remain in the communities, including individuals with disabilities and those requiring assistance and that requires supporting Maine's direct care workers who keep our loved ones healthy and safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions for me, I can be reached at bquinn@aarp.org

Bridget Quinn
AARP Maine