

Testimony in Support of LD 1932

January 20, 2026

*LD 1932: An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development*

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Lillian Campbell, and I serve as the Administrative Coordinator and Compliance Lead for Maine Vocational and Rehabilitation Associates (MVRA) at the Bangor division. MVRA provides services across Penobscot County, Kennebec County, Knox County, and Cumberland County, supporting over 100 individuals through essential services including community support, residential services, and employment supports.

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 1932, because the workforce crisis impacting Maine's direct care system is no longer a warning sign, it is a daily reality that is disrupting services and limiting access for the people who depend on them.

Like many providers across Maine, we are struggling to recruit and retain staff across *all* of our programs. There is no area that feels stable right now. Every service line is impacted. MVRA currently has nearly 10 open positions, and turnover remains high enough that recruitment has become constant. The time, effort, and cost involved in recruitment is taking a serious toll on our agency. We often spend thousands of dollars per month on advertising alone to fill open positions, and even with that investment, the workforce pipeline remains unreliable. Many applicants are not fully qualified, require extensive training and onboarding, or decline the job after learning the starting wage. We are competing directly with fast food and retail wages, and we cannot sustainably raise wages without reimbursement rates that actually support it. That money should be going toward strengthening care, not fighting to keep positions filled.

Because of staffing shortages, we are paying large amounts of overtime just to keep services running. This strain does not only impact budgets; it impacts people. Overtime contributes to exhaustion and burnout, and it increases the risk of losing our most reliable and experienced staff because they are consistently being asked to do more. We have



already lost strong team members because their wages simply were not livable. Every time we lose trained staff, the people we support lose consistency, relationships, and stability.

The real impact, however, is felt most by our members.

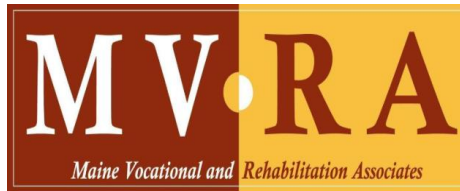
Our clients experience disrupted supports and cancelled shifts due to staffing limitations. Services frequently need to be adjusted the day-of, which means individuals are not able to fully prepare themselves for their day. For example, our day program may have to change planned activities because we do not have enough staff available to transport everyone at once. That is not fair to the clients who arrived expecting to participate fully in the activity they chose, and it is not what MaineCare services are meant to look like. People deserve reliable support, and they deserve a system that respects their time, goals, and their ability to plan their lives.

Due to workforce shortages and financial strain, MVRA has also been forced to pause programs and growth efforts. We currently have a waitlist of individuals interested in receiving services, but we are unable to accept them at this time because we do not have enough staff to provide safe and consistent support. In the last year, we have had to delay starts, reduce or adjust services, and make difficult decisions that no provider wants to make, not because the need isn't there, but because the system does not currently allow providers to meet that need.

LD 1932 is a necessary step toward stabilizing Maine's essential direct care workforce. The current reimbursement structure does not reflect wage realities, and delays in rate increases leave providers trapped in a cycle of falling behind. MVRA cannot pay above the 125% minimum wage threshold because reimbursement does not allow it, and every delay or partial increase makes it harder to catch up.

This bill matters because it is about more than wages; it is about access to care, continuity of services, safety, and dignity for Mainers with disabilities and behavioral health needs. Without a stable workforce, Maine's HCBS and direct care services cannot function in the way they are intended to function. Providers will continue to lose staff, people will continue to lose services, and families will continue to carry gaps that should never fall on them.

I urge this Committee to support LD 1932. We cannot continue to expect a mission-driven workforce to survive on wages that do not meet the cost of living. The people we support deserve consistency and opportunity. The staff who support them deserve fair



compensation. And Maine deserves a system that is strong enough to meet the needs of its communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Lillian Campbell

Administrative Coordinator & Compliance

Maine Vocational and Rehabilitation Associates (MVRA)