

Arwen Peterson
OADS DHHS
LD 2067

TO: Senator Tipping, Representative Mastraccio, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor FROM: Arwen Peterson, Crisis Response Worker DATE: January 20, 2026 RE: Support for LD 2067: An Act to Include Certain Community Mental Health Workers Under the 1998 Special Plan

Senator Tipping, Representative Mastraccio, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Arwen Peterson. I am currently employed as a Crisis Response Worker for the Office of Aging and Disability Services, Region I. My territory is vast, covering Oxford, York, and Cumberland Counties. I am writing to ask for your support on LD 2067.

While many view "social work" as an office job, my reality is quite different. I am often the sole responder called to stabilize adult clients in active crisis. In addition to responding in community settings, Community Response Workers are often the sole staff in our crisis homes. These situations frequently involve individuals presenting with aggressive, assaultive, and violent behaviors. We are not bystanders; we are physically involved in ensuring safety.

Because of this risk, restraint training is mandatory for my position. This is not just theoretical knowledge; we are expected to utilize physical restraint techniques when necessary to keep clients—and the public—safe. It is not uncommon for me to be in these volatile situations as the only Crisis Response Worker on scene, tasked with physically managing an escalated adult without immediate backup.

This job requires a high level of physical and mental dexterity. We are de-escalating with our words while being ready to intervene with our bodies.

The reality we must face is that as we age, the physical capacity required to safely perform this job diminishes. It is physically demanding to restrain an aggressive adult or manage a violent outburst, and the risk of injury increases significantly as the years go by. We cannot expect workers to safely perform these physical interventions into their late 60s without risking injury to themselves or the clients they are trying to protect. I have seen this occur first hand with my fellow co-workers.

The 1998 Special Plan was designed for roles where age and physical ability are critical factors in job performance. My role fits that description perfectly.

I ask you to please support this legislation to recognize the physical demands of our service and ensure a sustainable future for this workforce.

Respectfully,
Arwen Peterson