

Colleen Brown
Whiting
LD 2117

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Colleen Brown, M.Ed., and I am a Special Education Administrator in Maine. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 2117.

LD 2117 addresses a real and urgent issue in Maine's system of care for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder by directing DHHS to amend MaineCare rules related to vacancies in 2-person homes.

This resolve is practical, compassionate, and rooted in reality. When one resident leaves a 2-person home due to hospitalization, the remaining resident should not be put at risk of losing their home simply because the vacancy cannot be filled quickly. Extending the bed-hold timeframe from 30 days to 60 days recognizes the real-world length of hospital stays and recovery and reduces unnecessary disruption.

The resolve also requires DHHS and the provider to make meaningful efforts for 120 days to fill the vacancy before the remaining resident is threatened with eviction. That matters because housing stability is not a small issue for people with developmental disabilities and autism. For many individuals, home is not just a place to live. It is routine, predictability, behavioral stability, safety, and dignity. Forced moves can trigger regression, anxiety, and behavioral escalation and can create ripple effects across families, providers, and school systems.

I also support the exceptions in LD 2117 allowing DHHS to extend the vacancy-filling period in 60-day increments when the remaining resident's health and safety needs are being met and the person has lived there long-term or a suitable housemate is actively being identified. This is a common-sense approach that keeps vulnerable individuals from being displaced due to staffing shortages and placement delays that are outside of their control.

As Maine faces workforce shortages and service capacity limitations statewide, especially in rural areas, LD 2117 creates stability instead of crisis. It keeps people housed, reduces trauma, and supports a more functional system.

I respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2117.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Colleen Brown, M.Ed.
Special Education Administrator
Washington County, Maine