

In Support of LD 1932, An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development, Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

January 20, 2026

Dear Chair Ingwersen, Chair Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Kyle Pelletier, and I am from Fort Kent, Maine. I serve as the Co-Chair of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council, and I am also a proud member of Speaking Up For Us (SUFU). I am writing to testify in support of LD 1932.

We need more Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in Maine. Without enough DSPs, people with disabilities do not get the long-term services and supports we need to live safely, independently, and with purpose. When there is a lack of staff, our needs are not met. It becomes frustrating and sometimes scary.

DSPs often leave their jobs because they feel undervalued. Some feel like they are treated as “babysitters,” and many leave because they are not paid enough to support themselves or their families. When DSPs leave, people with disabilities lose the support we depend on. Being a DSP can be hard work, and it can be draining. It is time to reward DSPs with better pay and make them feel valued for the important work they do.

I support raising wages because people with disabilities matter, and the workers who support us matter too. We should not have to wait years for improvements that affect our daily lives.

I also want to talk about career paths. Being a DSP should be a real career, not just an entry-level job. DSPs should have opportunities to move up, take on leadership roles, and train new workers. LD 1932 includes a plan for training and training to help people move up in the career, and I support that. Good training helps DSPs understand the people they support and helps them grow in their field.

Training also needs to be consistent. If all DSPs had the same strong training materials, they would be better prepared to support people with disabilities. Training should include HCBS principles, like helping people make choices, supporting independence, and thinking creatively instead of just following a book.

I also want to talk about rural areas, like where I live. In places like Fort Kent, Eagle Lake, and Madawaska, programs struggle to offer meaningful activities because they feel stuck. Sometimes people just sit in a gym or go to the same places over and over. Staff want to do more, but they feel limited by staffing shortages and lack of support.

People with disabilities deserve purpose, not just entertainment. We need programs that help us learn skills, prepare for jobs, and be part of our communities. Sometimes staff need help thinking outside the box. I believe the state should support programs by offering real-time coaching and training, including bringing in people from outside the program, even self-advocates, to help programs grow and improve.

Technology can also help. DSPs should be able to use their phones to complete logs and paperwork so they can spend more time with the people they support. Technology can reduce unstaffed hours and help programs run more smoothly. LD 1932 includes a technology plan, and I support that.

Finally, LD 1932 looks at the care gap, which means the number of people who are approved for services but not receiving them because there are not enough workers. This is a real problem in our state. Studying the care gap and collecting better data will help Maine understand what is needed to fix the workforce crisis.

In closing, I support LD 1932 because it will help bring more DSPs into the field, improve training, support rural programs, and help people with disabilities live full and meaningful lives. I hope this bill passes and is signed by the Governor.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Respectfully,

Kyle Pelletier

Fort Kent, Maine