

Maine Alliance for Care at Home

Testimony in Support of LD 1932 An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development

January 20, 2026

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

My name is Sara Ratcliffe, and I serve as Executive Director of the Maine Alliance for Care at Home (formerly the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine). The Alliance is submitting testimony in support of LD 1932 with one recommended amendment that we will address at the end of our testimony.

The Maine Alliance for Care at Home is a network of home care, hospice, and personal care providers across our State delivering in-home care to older adults and disabled individuals of all ages, allowing them to stay in their homes and communities.

LD 1932 is an important bill that will help address gaps in care across the State. Bolstering our home care sector should be an essential part of Maine's strategy for improving our healthcare system in the challenging years ahead. Providing services in the home saves money by avoiding costly institutional care and allows Mainers to remain where they are most comfortable. In the home care sector, essential support professionals are a critical part of our workforce.

Workforce shortages remain one of the primary obstacles to ensuring access to long-term services and supports for older adults and individuals living with disabilities. High turnover rates (estimated between 40% and 60%) and increased demand for direct care services due to an aging population continue to exacerbate the shortage of direct care workers.

Home care essential support workers assist older adults and individuals of all ages with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). ADLs include housekeeping, meal preparation, transferring/mobility; as well as more intimate care such as bathing, dressing and toileting. By supporting these basic health care needs, Maine's older adults and those with disabilities are able to stay in their home and community.

Members of our Alliance are primarily providing services under MaineCare sections 19, 40, 96 and OADS state-funded section 63. According to the most recent report pursuant to PL 2021, c. 398, Section AAAA-7, *Efforts and Progress in Implementing the Recommendations*

of the Commission to Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues, the following gaps in care exist:

Sec. 19 Home and Community Benefits for Elderly and Adults with Disabilities

49% of members are not receiving full services for which they qualify

Sec. 96 Private Duty Nursing and Personal Care Services

50% of members are not receiving full services for which they qualify

OADS Sec. 63 In-Home and Community Support Services for Elderly and Other Adults

45% of members are not receiving full services for which they qualify

[Sec. 40 (Home Health Services) is not included in the AAAA report.]

These gaps exist in large part due to nuanced workforce challenges. LD 1932 seeks to address these gaps by supporting and growing the essential support workforce. To achieve that end, LD 1932 proposes raising reimbursement rates for wages and benefits in relevant sections of MaineCare, developing a standardized training program for all essential support workers to make their credential more portable, exploring how technology can help fill workforce gaps, and using data to better understand and address workforce and funding shortages across the state.

The gap between the numbers of Mainers seeking care and the availability of workers to provide that care is a challenge that we must face as our population continues to age. We urge you to pass LD 1932 as the next step in addressing this continuing problem.

We would recommend one amendment to the bill. There are at least two sections of the bill (sec. 6 & 7) that reference specific MaineCare sections, as those are the sections within which Essential Support Professionals provide services, however MaineCare Section 40 is not included in this list. Home Health Aides work within Section 40 and are considered Essential Support Professionals. Therefore we would recommend adding Section 40 to the bill.

Thank you,

Sara Ratcliffe

Executive Director

Maine Alliance for Care at Home

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