

**Testimony of Hannah Elizabeth Hutchings,
Creative Trails / Support Solutions
In Support of LD 1932
“An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce
Development”**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Hannah Elizabeth Hutchings. I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP) / Artist Mentor at Creative Trails in Biddeford, ME.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1932 “An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development.”

I feel privileged to be able to do this work, helping individuals to develop the skills, confidence, and autonomy to live successful, fulfilling lives. It's enriching to learn about their unique experiences and perspectives in order to support them to work toward their goals and aspirations for the future. In many cases, supporting these individuals has helped me to become a better support for myself.

Unfortunately, as enriching and wonderful as this work is, it is difficult to remain in any position without adequate compensation. Many staff are unable to stay longer than 6 months to a year due to insufficient wages and benefits. This negatively impacts morale in staff and participants alike. The work we do requires building long-term relationships with everyone involved, allowing individuals to learn and grow together over time. This cannot be achieved without consistent support from trusted staff.

I have personally been considering applying for a second job on top of working as a full time DSP to supplement my income. Doing so will surely lead to burnout, and will affect the care and support I am able to provide to the people who rely on me daily. I don't want to be forced to leave this work, and the people we do this work for, in order to make a decent living.

I don't want my coworkers to be forced to make that choice, either. The staff I work with are amazing and inspiring individuals. We look out and care for each other just as we do for our participants. Like family, I can't imagine losing them. I know our participants feel similarly.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hannah Elizabeth Hutchings
Creative Trails / Support Solutions