

Heather Andersen
SKillsInc.net
LD 1932

Testimony of Heather Andersen, resident of Athens Maine.

LD 1932: An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
January 20, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1932: An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development.

DIRECT CARE/DSP PROMPT: My name is Heather Andersen. I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP), and I work to provide support to Individuals with Intellectual disabilities in a group home waiver situation for SkillsInc. I have been working in this field for 28 years and working with SkillsInc 26 years. I work with individuals in a group home waiver supporting them in their daily lives. This includes bathing, toileting, hygiene, preventive care, doctor visits, medication administration, finance planning, budgeting, career planning, volunteering and any activities that may interest those in my care. I have always liked helping people and especially watching someone learn new things for the first time or many times and eventually gaining the skills needed to do it independently. I continue to stay in the field for those many reasons: gaining independence, watching someone see that they can do so much with just a little bit of help. A small task to me is someone else's life achievement.

Currently I do not have to work more than this job however while raising my children I worked doing more in home health at night and on weekends to pay for my gas to get to this job. I had to also change shifts and houses many times to get more money so that I could continue to travel to my job without it costing the family money. I have had to borrow from family for many incidentals throughout these years Ie. new furnace, oil for oil tank, propane for stove, taxes and car registrations and inspections.

I am concerned about no wage increases for many reasons, not just my own. It is concerning to me that I am being asked to do a job by many other people during the course of my day. I do the direct care piece but then I also am a team leader of the home so I am responsible for everyone's safety, car maintenance, home maintenance and proper reporting to get it done, to notifying caseworkers of goals and skills needed to be worked on, finances for items that need to be bought, and managing healthcare concerns and medications for all involved. These responsibilities are more than a CNA does during the course of their own work day. In a nursing home many people are in charge of a person's care. In our homes the DSP's do all of those jobs on a menial income. It is not the fault of the company if they can not give raises because of the government not reimbursing at an affordable wage. According to the internet a livable wage in Maine for a single person is 22.10 an hour. If our goal in Maine is to decrease the need for public assistance then we need to increase these wages so a single parent or a family can exist comfortably without fear of going without needed items. I urge you all to do the math and then add groceries, utilities, 4 kids, incidentals and living expenses to that wage and applaud all of us for keeping our heads above water.

I have an aging parent, my concern is the need for care givers that care. That takes the job seriously enough to make a difference in someone's life. They engage, interact, want to make a difference and if I can get paid the same amount of money at

McDonalds without all the responsibilities why wouldn't I. I am worried about where the care is going to be in the future. Are we heading back to aggregate living in a huge facility to save on wages or keeping people with relatives with intermittent services that may or may not be the wishes of the supported person. My work is valuable to those that need me. I deserve to be compensated for the work I do and the time lost with my own family to do this valuable work.

I ask that you support LD 1932. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Heather Andersen

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