

michelle smith
3 Rivers
LD 1932

Testimony of Michelle Smith

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

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

Dear 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.

My name is Michelle Smith, and I live in Casco Maine. I am writing to you today not only as a constituent, but as a Direct Support Professional, a CRMA, and a training mentor who has dedicated my career to supporting individuals with disabilities. I am urging you to support LD 1932: An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development.

I have worked in this field for 6 years, and during that time I have supported people in their homes, in the community, and through some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. My work requires patience, skill, medical knowledge, emotional strength, and a deep commitment to the people I serve. I train new staff, I support individuals with complex needs, and I show up every day because I believe in the dignity and independence of the people I work with.

But the reality is that the wages in this field do not reflect the responsibility or the impact of the work. The lack of a full COLA last year made it even harder for DSPs to keep up with rising costs. Like many others in this profession, I have felt the strain, paying for housing, groceries, transportation, and basic necessities has become increasingly difficult. I love this work but love alone cannot sustain a workforce.

LD 1932's proposal to establish a wage floor at 125% of minimum wage is not just reasonable, it is essential. Without competitive wages, we cannot attract or retain the staff needed to provide consistent, safe, and meaningful support. I see firsthand how staffing shortages affect the people we serve: missed opportunities, reduced community access, increased stress for families, and real risks to health and safety.

The individuals I support deserve stability. They deserve caregivers who can afford to stay in this field. They deserve a system that values the people who show up for them every day.

Supporting LD 1932 is a step toward protecting the well being of people with disabilities and strengthening the workforce that makes community living possible. Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration. I respectfully ask that you support LD 1932.

Michelle Smith
msmith@3-rivers.org
Casco Maine
