

January 19, 2026

**To the Esteemed Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, Maine State Legislature, Augusta, ME 04333**

**RE: Strong Support for LD 1932, An Act to Strengthen Maine's Essential Care and Support Workforce**

Dear Legislators,

My name is Susan Wehry, MD and I write to you today as a Maine citizen and as a physician who has dedicated over four decades of my professional life to the field of geriatrics and long-term care. My experience in service to marginalized populations, both on the front lines of patient and resident well-being and in state government (VT Commissioner, Aging and Disabilities 2011-2015), compels me to speak in unequivocal support of **LD 1932**. This bill is not merely a budgetary line item; it is an essential investment in the dignity of Mainers in need of care and support and the workers who provide it.

The core of quality long-term care rests not with high-tech equipment or bureaucratic oversight, but with the **Direct Care Worker (DCW)**. These essential professionals—Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), Personal Support Specialists (PSSs), and others—are the anchors of our system. They provide the highly intimate, continuous, and complex support that allows thousands of older Mainers and people with disabilities to live with independence, dignity, and a greater quality of life. They are the eyes, ears, and hands of the entire healthcare team, often being the first to recognize a subtle change in health status that prevents a costly and dangerous trip to the emergency room. Their critical role cannot be overstated, yet their compensation and professional recognition have historically failed to reflect their value.

To truly honor this critical role, we must prioritize and fund **adequate training and professionalization**. The increasing complexity of chronic conditions, dementia care, and mental health needs requires a workforce equipped with specialized skills. I am heartened by the initiatives currently underway, such as AgingME, Maine's Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) to address this. This collaborative effort led by the Universities of New England, Maine and Southern Maine Community College and others will establish a **Geriatrics Specialist microcredential** for direct care workers. LD 1932's provision to strengthen credentialing and training is crucial to formalize and accelerate this essential work, ensuring that every Mainer receives care from a professional with the best possible education.

Inadequate wages have helped fuel a devastating workforce shortage, leaving thousands of approved care hours unfilled each week. Many CNAs must work two or more jobs just to meet the basic costs of food, shelter, transportation and clothing. LD 1932 provides a critical opportunity to begin to correct this shameful situation by raising the reimbursement floor to **140% of the minimum wage**. This measure, combined with strengthened credentialing, will improve retention, attract new talent, and demonstrate to this invaluable workforce that Maine truly values their service.

I appreciate the complexities and the realities of competing demands. I believe that investing in LD 1932 is a foundational investment in a healthier, more economically resilient Maine. I urge you to pass this legislation and affirm your commitment to the aging citizens of our state and the dedicated professionals who care for them.

Respectfully,

  
Susan Wehry, M.D.

Geriatric Psychiatrist

Former VT Commissioner, Department of Disabilities and Aging, Agency of Human Services, 2011-2015

40+ Years of Experience in Long-Term Care

