



# Independence Association

Celebrating Ability Since 1966

2025 - 2026

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**Mission:** To support adults and children with disabilities to achieve full and inclusive lives in their chosen communities.

**LD 1932:** An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development  
**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO:** Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE:** January 20, 2026

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

My name is Brett Bulmer, and I serve as Executive Director of Independence Association, a Brunswick-based nonprofit organization that provides support services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Like many providers across Maine, our ability to deliver these critical services depends entirely on the dedication, training, and professionalism of Direct Support Professionals, or DSPs.

DSPs are entrusted with the health, safety, dignity, and well-being of individuals with significant support needs across Maine. They administer medications, respond to medical and behavioral crises, assist individuals in their homes and communities, and support people in living fuller, more independent lives. **The level of responsibility placed on DSPs is substantial, yet their compensation does not reflect either the complexity or the importance of the work they perform.**

Unfortunately, it has become routine for me to hear of DSPs who are struggling to meet their own basic needs. Many leave the field not for lack of commitment or skill, but because remaining in the profession is no longer financially sustainable. I frequently hear accounts of staff who are:

- Unable to afford necessary vehicle repairs or registration fees, despite relying on their vehicles to get to work
- Delaying or forgoing needed medical care or prescription medications
- Struggling to consistently afford groceries for themselves or their families
- Forced to choose between paying for heat, rent, or other essential expenses

Within the past year alone, I learned of two employees who were unable to afford stable housing for a period of time, with at least one of them living in their car.

These are not isolated incidents. They reflect broader workforce pressures that undermine recruitment, retention, and continuity of care within Maine's disability services system.

**The question before you is a straightforward one: should the people who devote their careers to supporting some of Maine's most vulnerable individuals struggle to meet their own basic needs because their wages are insufficient?**

From my perspective, the answer is clear. Supporting essential support workers is not only a matter of fairness; it is also fundamental to workforce stability, service quality, and the long-term sustainability of Maine's disability services system. Investments that strengthen this workforce help ensure continuity of care, reduce turnover-related costs, and protect access to services for the people and families who depend on them.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 1932 and take a meaningful step toward strengthening and stabilizing this essential workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Brett Bulmer, Executive Director**