

Katrina Shaffer
PORTLAND
LD 1932

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of LD 1932 based on my personal experience as a direct support professional and as someone who has spent nearly three decades working in Maine's system of care.

I began working as a DSP in 1998 and have dedicated almost 30 years to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and brain injuries. Like many in this field, I eventually moved into administrative work, not because I wanted to leave direct care, but because it was one of the few ways to remain in the system long term. Even in an administrative role, after decades of service, I still do not earn a living wage.

That reality speaks volumes about the chronic underinvestment in this workforce.

Low wages are not an abstract policy problem. It is something workers live with every day. It drives talented, compassionate people out of jobs they love and are good at. It creates constant turnover that disrupts services, fractures trust, and undermines the stability that individuals and families depend on. I have seen firsthand how difficult it is for providers to staff programs responsibly when reimbursement rates do not reflect the true cost of labor.

LD 1932 directly addresses this long-standing problem by adjusting MaineCare reimbursement rates to support competitive wages. By tying labor costs to 140% of minimum wage and establishing a wage floor for essential support workers, this bill creates a realistic path forward for providers to retain staff and for workers to stay in roles that are meaningful, skilled, and essential.

The work DSPs do saves the state money by preventing the need for higher levels of care, while also strengthening communities and supporting families. Yet for far too long, that work has been treated as expendable. After 28 years in this field, I can say clearly that the system cannot function without a stable, fairly compensated workforce.

It is about dignity, continuity of care, and the long-term sustainability of Maine's care economy, not just about wages. I urge you to support this bill and make a real investment in the people who make this system work every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Katrina Shaffer