



January 19, 2026

Senator Henry Ingwersen
Representative Michele Meyer
Committee on Health & Human Services
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD 1932 - An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and the honorary members of Health & Human Services Committee:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Portland, Maine. I have the honor of serving as the President & CEO for VOA Northern New England which is headquartered in Brunswick. VOA Northern New England is a faith-based, community nonprofit that has offered housing and social supports to older adults and persons with disabilities for over 30 years.

I write in support of LD 1932 as provider of services and an employer of direct care professionals. I am particularly supportive of the bill's proposal to adjusts reimbursement rates to support wage and benefit cost increases as the minimum wage rises each year, maintaining reimbursement rates at 140% of the minimum wage.

By committing now to necessary investments in our direct care workforce, we are addressing our state's reality that our population is aging and will require increased services and care professionals in the years to come. Maine should pay competitive wages and budget for the true cost of care so that we strengthen and increase the capacity of our community resources and organizations which support older adults, people with disabilities, and their families.

VOA Northern New England is proud of our high-quality affordable housing for older adults, the residential services we offer, and our spectrum of residential treatment homes for persons with disabilities. However, our agency has spent considerable amount of time and resources since COVID on recruitment and retention of our workforce. Like many community-based nonprofits offering services to older adults and persons with disabilities, VOA has experienced challenges in recruiting new employees to fill open positions and increasing rates of turnover.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a 2.8% turnover rate for the Health and Social Assistance sector as of August 2025. VOA's turnover is nearly twice that rate with 5.38% in October, 2024 and 5.62% in October, 2025. We do not believe that we are outliers from other health and social service employers in Maine and that these rates reflect the continued staffing pressures common to other community-based nonprofits.

Our annual strategic plan now incorporates strategies to improve retention of our care professionals since long-term team members improve continuity of care and enhance trust and communication leading to better health outcomes. Additionally, by offering direct care professionals higher wages we are signaling our respect for and the value of the skills they offer to individuals and our society.

LD 1932 will help Maine and our network of health and social service nonprofit organizations build a stronger and more sustainable care system. Thank you for considering my testimony. I am grateful for your public service and leadership to our Maine communities!

Sincerely,



Richard A. Hooks Wayman, President & CEO

VOA Northern New England

14 Maine Street, Suite 100

Brunswick, ME 04011

rich.hookswayman@voanne.org

www.voanne.org

207-373-1140