

Melissa Warren
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LD 1932

Senator, Representative, and members of the Committee,

My name is Melissa Warren, I am a Speech-Language Pathologist working in Oakland, Maine. I love my profession. I was initially drawn to this profession because every single SLP I spoke with absolutely loved their jobs. I have the privilege to work with a range of ages (birth - death) in a variety of settings (schools, clinics, hospitals, nursing homes). What I do directly impacts my clients ability to succeed, it directly impacts their quality of life, and, in many cases such as swallowing intervention, directly impacts life and death.

Many people do not know what a speech pathologist is until they need one. If you ask anyone who has had speech therapy they will tell you it is a godsend. My education was thorough. Four years of undergraduate training and three of full time graduate level training complete with over 100 supervised clinical hours, two externships, and a certified fellowship year before I was able to practice. This was not cheap. In fact, I will likely be in debt for the rest of my life because of it.

Our field is slowly dying. If you look, almost every district in central Maine is looking for a speech therapist (most have had to utilize teletherapy due to this shortage). None of us entered this profession to become rich, but we all need to make enough to live and pay off our education debts. SLPs often leave this state seeking higher wages because they must. And despite the loss of therapist, the need for SLPs continues to grow. Those of us who stay are desperately trying to cover for these losses.

I want to help the children of central Maine. I grew up here. I left to receive an education in Washington DC (where the pay is substantially higher), and I came back. I came back because I want to help the communities that raised me. I want to see kids be able to access general education. I want to support families in raising their neurodiverse children with their individual needs.

This bill would raise wages and improve training. It would make staying in this state more feasible, thus attracting SLPs to this area. This would lead to less burnout and turnover so that families can have more stable care.

Please support LD 1932.

Thank you for your time and for listening.