

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Scott Cunningham. I live in Belgrade and have worked for one year as a Direct Support Professional (DSP), I worked the previous 38 years as a small business owner but wanted to pursue an endeavor that was dear to my heart, supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities. Currently, I work at a Community Support Program four days a week and also provide one-on-one support twice a week. My focus is on teaching basic Activities of Daily Living—such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping—as well as promoting Community Integration through volunteering, shopping, and activities that individuals might not typically access, like bowling, visiting museums, exploring state parks, and trips to the coast.

I'm here today not only as a frontline worker but also as an advocate for my brother, who has an intellectual disability and requires total support from DSPs to live independently. His well-being, along with that of thousands of others, depends on the dedication and stability of DSPs.

“Over the past 40 years, I have witnessed and seen the impact high turnover among DSP's has had on my brother. In many instances, just as he became comfortable and developed repour with a DSP they would leave and have to start the process all over again with a new DSP. This was extremely frustrating for him and would limit his progress in many area's. Daily routines and trust that had been created between the DSP and my brother had to be re-established each time a person left. There is no doubt in my mind that if the position was adequately compensated that the situation would have been much different and my brother would have benefited from more consistent care due to lower turnover.”

Why LD 1932 Matters

Currently, essential support workers are reimbursed at 125% of Maine's minimum wage. For a 40-hour week, that pay barely covers basic living costs. LD 1932 would raise that rate to 140% of minimum wage, providing much-needed financial relief and recognition for the critical work we do every day. Better pay means I can stay in this job longer. Longevity leads to career advancement and stability—and stability among DSPs means less stress, lower turnover, and more consistent, high-quality care for the individuals we serve.

The Impact of Staffing Shortages

Every day, individuals go without staff because of statewide shortages. This has a drastic impact—not only on mental health but also on physical health. Without staff

support, individuals miss essential community access, including medical appointments and even basic needs like grocery shopping.

LD 1932 addresses this by requiring systematic reporting by the Maine Health Data Organization on the gap between approved hours and hours actually delivered—the “care gap.” This data will help us understand where support is falling short and how to fix it.

Building a Stronger Workforce

The bill also mandates development of a five-year training and career advancement plan, as well as an “Innovations in Care & Support Technology Plan” by October 15, 2026. These measures will equip DSPs with better skills and tools to support people like my brother.

Closing

I urge this Committee to support LD 1932. This isn’t just about fairness for DSPs—it’s about ensuring stable, high-quality care for my brother and countless families across Maine. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ryan Thompson
Assistance Plus
LD 1932
Speaking for DSP Scott Cunningham