

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 1932

### *An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development*

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

My name is Anita Brown, and I am the Clinical Director for Opportunity Enterprises, an organization that supports over 400 Mainers who experience intellectual disability and/or autism. More importantly, I have worked in this field for 37 years, in roles ranging from direct support professional to administration.

I have seen this system through early advocacy to close Pineland, budget shortfalls, government shutdowns, and repeated workforce crises. **One truth has remained constant: our services are only as strong as the workforce that delivers them.**

I once worked with a direct support professional who was a single mother raising two young boys. She was exceptional—committed, skilled, and deeply invested in the people she supported. I offered her a promotion with a wage increase, modest but the most we could offer under existing reimbursement rates. She had to decline it. The raise would have caused her children to lose eligibility for SNAP and MaineCare, yet it was nowhere near enough to afford groceries and health insurance on her own. Staying in her profession meant staying trapped.

That is not a failure of the worker. It is a failure of the system.

**Current reimbursement rates also limit who we are able to recruit and retain. The direct support professional role is complex and highly regulated under OADS, CMS, and MaineCare.** DSPs must be intelligent, emotionally regulated, and socially skilled. They must learn a complex service system, meet strict compliance requirements, and work in environments that rely heavily on technology for documentation, communication, and training. **When wages do not reflect these expectations, we narrow the pool of qualified workers and increase risk to the system.**

If we do not act, we will continue to lose experienced workers, increase system instability, and incur higher costs through crisis services. Chronic understaffing leads to emergency placements, hospitalizations, and service disruptions—outcomes that are far more expensive and far more harmful.

**LD 1932 strengthens the workforce through recruitment, retention, and development—key drivers of service quality and continuity.** Success means workers can afford to stay, advance, and build careers, while the people they support experience stability and consistency. Investing in this workforce is both the right thing to do and the fiscally responsible thing to do.

I urge you to support LD 1932.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

**Anita Brown**

**abrown@oeime.org**