



To the Health and Human Service Committee

From: Kim Humphrey, Community Connect Maine, Auburn, mother of a person with profound autism

Re: In Support of LD 1932 "An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development"

Date: January 20, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Kim Humphrey, and I live in Auburn. I am the Founder and President of Community Connect Maine and a member of Maine's Essential Care & Support Workforce Partnership. The Partnership is a broad coalition of providers, workers, caregivers, and family members working together to strengthen and support Maine's care workforce. I am also the mother of an adult with profound autism who is supported through a Section 21 waiver.

In 2019, I represented the consumer voice—as a family member—on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Long-Term Care Workforce Legislative Committee. That commission's work was a distinct, deliberative process involving comprehensive discussion and the development of proactive workforce strategies, many of which laid important groundwork relevant to this issue. Independent of that work, I also appreciate Speaker Ryan Fecteau's five years of leadership and effort to bring LD 1932 to fruition.

Through our Community Connect Maine network, we regularly hear from individuals and families who struggle for years due to chronic short staffing and service gaps. Often families have witnessed a stark difference in individual's quality of life when the individual is supported by a coordinated, trained, and stable workforce compared to periods marked by turnover and service gaps. Costly and heartbreakng crises are often avoided when a steady workforce is in place.

Providers are unable to take people off waitlists when they cannot find direct care workers. Programs have been consolidated or closed altogether, disrupting the lives of the people they serve. Individuals with more complex disabilities face even greater challenges finding and sustaining appropriate placements and are at increased risk of ending up in inappropriate settings such as emergency rooms or hospitals.

Within the direct care workforce, experienced workers are an invaluable resource. When they leave the field, their knowledge and skills are not easily replaced. It is both sad and frustrating to hear dedicated staff say they are leaving, even when they express that they want to stay, because they simply need a higher wage.

People cannot change who they are or what they need to fit the structure of a service system. Provider rates and direct care wages must be sufficient to sustain quality programming. That means they must be competitive with other jobs, including entry-level positions such as gas station clerks. The skills required of direct care workers to support an individual's needs are worth at least 140% of minimum wage. These workers deserve dignified pay, just as the people they support deserve dignified lives.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote in support of LD 1932.