

Testimony in Favor of LD 1932 An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development

Good day, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Betsy Sawyer-Manter and I am the CEO at SeniorsPlus, the area agency on aging for Western Maine and a statewide service coordination agency. I am offering my testimony in support of LD1932.

Maine's essential care workforce is just that.... essential. It is the backbone of the long-term care system in the state of Maine. This workforce assists people across the lifespan in maintaining independence. It is the care system for so many both at home and in facility care. These front-line workers are critical to assist with critical tasks of everyday living that most of us take for granted. Supporting the development of skills and livable wages and benefits will help ensure a workforce that is reliable and ready to support people as they age.

I have written support for this type of legislation many times over my seventeen years in the field of aging. It was not until recently that it became as much a personal issue as an advocacy concern.

My husband was recently ill and had two hospitalizations within weeks of one another. During that time, I experienced firsthand the work of the CNAs who took care of my husband's needs throughout his combined 14 days in the hospital. The intimate and important things that they paid attention were so integral to his well-being.

Additionally, as his caregiver once he was home, I have now come to appreciate the work of the workforce and how much it means to families and the person they are caring for. Fortunately for us, I was able to adjust my work and care for him myself. Often this is not the case and professional support workers come into the home and take this on.

This workforce is necessary. This workforce is particularly important to an aging demographic. We all know that Maine is the oldest state in the nation by median age and is not getting younger. By 2034, our nation will have more people over the age of sixty-five than under eighteen. Maine is the canary in the coal mine. We can lead the nation by showing our support for this workforce by creating opportunities for transferable credentialing and offering livable wages and benefits that recognize this important work that happens in homes across the state, day in and out.

I hope you will consider passage of this important bill. Please feel free to reach out to 207-671-5621 or bsawyer-manter@seniorsplus.org should you have any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy Sawyer-Manter
President and CEO
SeniorsPlus

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