

Stacey Dombrowski
Winthrop
LD 1932

Senator, Representative, and members of the Committee,

My name is Stacey Dombrowski, and I currently work as a BHP in Augusta.

I am writing in support of LD 1932.

I wanted to share some thoughts on what it's actually like working as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) and Behavioral Health Professional (BHP) in Maine right now. While the heart of the work—helping individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism live independently—remains incredibly rewarding, 2026 has brought some heavy "trials and tribulations" to our field.

The most pressing challenge is the ongoing financial strain. Despite the critical nature of our work, many of us are still struggling with wages that barely compete with retail or fast food, with some residential positions starting around \$17–\$20 an hour. The cancellation of planned 2025 cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) due to state budget gaps has been a significant blow, leaving many veteran workers feeling undervalued as they miss out on expected raises through 2026 and 2027.

This financial pressure feeds directly into a severe workforce crisis:

Chronic Staffing Shortages: Nearly 90% of Maine providers report moderate to severe staffing shortages this year.

Burnout and Turnover: High vacancy rates often lead to mandatory overtime and heavier caseloads, which in turn fuels a national turnover rate that still hovers near 40%.

Impact on Care: These shortages aren't just numbers—they mean programs are being cut, and many Mainers are being turned away from the services they desperately need. There is also a significant emotional and physical weight to the role. We are often managing "reportable events," which can range from medical emergencies to serious behavioral incidents, all while trying to ensure our clients feel like the independent adults they are.

That said, there is some hope on the horizon. The state is preparing for the July 2026 launch of the Lifespan Waiver, which aims to reform how disability services are delivered and potentially stabilize the system. There are also ongoing efforts to establish a more standardized, portable training curriculum to help us advance in our careers.

Ultimately, being a DSP in Maine means being part of a resilient but exhausted workforce. We do it because we care, but the system itself is currently being tested like never before.

LD 1932 would help by supporting better pay and training for workers like me. This would help people stay in their jobs longer and provide more stable care to clients and families.

I want to keep doing this work, and I want to see this field grow stronger.

Unfortunately at this time, choosing to work in this field comes at a great expense to the workers and their family, that they are trying so desperately trying to support.

Please support LD 1932.

Thank you for your time and for listening.

Sincerely,
Stacey Dombrowski
BHP/DSP, HR Specialist
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