

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

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My name is Kim Humphrey. I live in Auburn, Maine. I am the Founder and President of Community Connect Maine, a nonprofit with a statewide network of more than 4,000 people. I am also the mother of an adult son with profound autism who lives in a two-person group home supported through the Section 21 waiver. I am here representing both myself and Community Connect Maine, in strong support of this resolve.

My son's life has been shaped by repeated transitions in care. At age 11, he was sent out of state because Maine did not have appropriate options. When we tried to bring him home, he spent eight years on the Section 21 waitlist. During that time, it became very clear that for individuals with complex needs, safe and appropriate housing options are extremely limited.

In 2009, at age 20, my son returned to Maine and moved into a two-person group home. It took six months to find a compatible housemate. For people with higher needs, finding the *right* housemate is not easy, but it is essential. Compatibility directly affects stability, safety, and behavior. Taking the time to do it right matters.

When properly supported, my son thrives. He currently delivers Meals on Wheels to 16 clients each week. But decades of experience have shown me that poorly planned transitions, gaps in care, and instability in supports are strong predictors of behavioral crises. **Stability matters.**

The current vacancy policy does not provide sufficient flexibility for people with complex needs. It also is more challenging in parts of the state with less access to resources. Maine has committed to Home and Community-Based Services principles, which emphasize choice, stability, and the right to live in a home and community you consider your own. **Policies that threaten to force people out of their homes due to rigid administrative timelines, particularly following hospitalization or a housemate transition, directly contradict those principles.**

It is also important to understand how current waiver and waitlist policies may be contributing to this problem. Section 21 is the adult waiver that provides access to group homes for I/DD and autism. During early planning for the Lifespan waiver, the state froze access to Section 21 for individuals on the priorities 2 and 3 waitlist for a section 21 waiver, while keeping priority 1 open for the most urgent cases. At the same time, the policy provides access to Section 29, which allows shared living but not group homes. Four consecutive years of DHHH OADS Developmental Disability Services Quarterly Data reports (SFY 23 Q1- SFY 26 Q1) show an increasing trend of individuals in shared living compared to individuals in group homes.*

There may well be individuals on the priority 2, Section 21 waitlist who could appropriately fill 2 person group home vacancies if access to it were not frozen. Specifically regarding the 2-person home vacancy rule: **No one should be threatened to lose their home because of a policy imbalance the state itself has created.** Does the state currently provide exceptions to the frozen priority 2 waitlist in order to help a fill a 2-person group home vacancy?

There is also a financial fairness issue. After 90 days, the state stops reimbursing for support but continues to expect providers to fund housing and care. **This shifts financial responsibility away from the state and onto providers, placing individuals and families in the middle of systemic conflict and undermining quality of life.**

LD2117 resolve helps correct these problems. By extending timelines and allowing limited exceptions, it reduces unnecessary pressure on providers, protects individuals from the fear of avoidable displacement, and supports continuity of care. **Without these changes, providers will increasingly hesitate to serve individuals with higher medical or behavioral needs, worsening housing shortages and contributing to prolonged hospital stays, and other deplorable outcomes.**

Shared living is a good option for some people, but it is not appropriate for everyone. Group homes remain essential, and once they are lost, rising housing costs make replacement unlikely.

This resolve protects stability, fairness, and choice. It aligns with HCBS values, keeps people in their homes and protects access to group homes as a service option for those who need it.

I respectfully urge the committee to support this resolve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kim Humphrey

Founder and President of Community Connect Maine

Mother of an individual in a 2-person group home

Appendix A: Data Source and Context

The attached table summarizes trends in the *count of individuals* in residential settings for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Maine. Data were extracted from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS), Developmental Disability Services Quarterly Reports from State Fiscal Year 2023 through State Fiscal Year 2026.

In 2022 there were more people in group homes than shared living. In subsequent years this has steadily reversed. These trends raise concerns about the long-term availability of group homes for individuals with

State Fiscal Year (SFY) '23- '26 Q1 Count of Section 21 and 29 Individuals
by Residential Service Types
Table 1

SFY Quarter '23-'26	Count-Group Homes	Count-Shared Living	Count-In-Home Support	Count-Total Residential Service Types	Difference in Count: Group Homes compared to Shared Living	Group Homes Count/ Total Residential Service type Count(%)	Shared Living Count /Total Residential Service Type Count (%)
SFY23 Q1 (July 1-Sept 30 '22)	1,872	1,792	712	4,376	+80 group homes	42.7%	40.9%
SFY24 Q1 (July 1-Sept 30 '23)	1,899	2,011	721	4,631	+112 share living	41.0%	43.4%
SFY25 Q1 (July 1-Sept 30 '24)	1,957	2,150	734	4,841	+193 shared living	40.4%	44.4%
SFY26 Q1 (July 1-Sept 30 '25)	2,020	2,400	1,333	5,753	+380 shared living	35.1%	41.7%

higher needs who require this level of support.