



Testimony of Angela Berry

In opposition to

LD 2177 *An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System*

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

February 11, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Angela Berry. I am the HR Director/Operations Officer of Happy Haven LLC. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to
LD 2077 An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System.

I am providing written testimony today to share how Section 3 of LD 2177 would affect our ability to plan, stabilize services, and continue supporting the individuals and families who rely on us.

Who We Serve

Our consumers are people with IDD and Autism who need the support of staff that is well trained and committed to working with people with their particular needs. We are currently serving people in the Lewiston/Auburn/Turner areas in Androscoggin County. We have several residential group homes that our people call home, living the life they choose with staff that support them to be able to live in a safe and productive way. The community at large is very supportive of the homes as they serve the people who need them but also reduces the number of unhoused people in the community.

Concerns with Section 3, Subsection 4 of LD 2177

If LD 2177 section 3 is successful it will have an impact on our ability to recruit, and retain staff, being a DSP working with people who struggle with behaviors and are not well versed in the social standards is very difficult work, we are dealing with people who are in need of support and care and love, without the DSP's who are working with them daily they would fall between the cracks and get lost in the system and community. If we make reimbursement adjustments contingent on appropriations, we will not be able to sustain our staffing needs and our services. If agencies cannot sustain the work force needed due to low wages and have to close even more services than they already have, I believe the cost will be greater for care given at hospitals and Urgent Care facilities.

Why Predictability and Transparency Matter

We need to have predictable funding to avoid the staff shortages and be able to retain the staff who are adequately trained. Training is at a cost to the agency, there is also new regulations coming from the OADS that requires more training and more certifications to work with people and although I do not disagree that training is so very important when working with people,

there should be an upside for the people who are considering this career path. This upside would be dependable pay based on performance; without a predictable funding rate this would not be a possibility. The agency would not be able to sustain the added burden of the cost of training and not having a decent wage to offer.

The delayed and reduced COLA's in FY25 and 26 along with the wait for new HCBS rates that have not been implemented have created difficulties in planning, offering services to additional people in need and have a cost not reimbursed for the training required. All of this reduces and takes away the ability to support people who desperately need those services.

- The need is huge for competitive wages, with the new regulations on training and certificates needed to work in this industry, it would allow people interested in working with people to earn a living wage without having to take on 2 or more jobs. To be effective in serving people with IDD and Autism there needs to stability that would not be there if the wages do not meet the living needs.
- As an agency we have had additional costs to comply with the new licensing and preparation for the new service design under the OADS, this is a unplanned for cost that takes away from serving the people who need support, that is what it is and should be about is serving the people who are the most vulnerable.

Closing

I ask that you join me in not allowing LD2177 Section 3 to pass, remove the language that would make the MaineCare Rate Setting System and thus any specific service reimbursement or for delivering vital care and support to individuals with disabilities, subject to available appropriations.

Please oppose LD2177.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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