

Kristin Overton
SKILLS, Inc.
LD 2177

Testimony of Kristin Overton, resident of Chesterville
LD 2177: An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
February 11, 2026

Good morning, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I'm providing testimony against LD 2177, specifically Section 3, Subsection 4.

I am Kristin Overton and the Executive Director of SKILLS, Inc, and serve on the Board of Directors for MACSP and represent providers of Community Supports and Employment Services Committee. SKILLS is a non-profit provider, serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities for 65 years in Somerset, Kennebec, Penobscot, and Waldo counties. We employ over 140 and provide more than 120 people with residential, community building, in-home, and employment support. I recognize the many fair and valid points the Department raises and many of the valid changes. I oppose, specifically, the language which makes appropriations discretionary or forgotten.

The majority of providers are barely scraping by. At SKILLS, we've had to stop giving raises and significantly reduce healthcare coverage in order to still not make ends meet. We are not rolling in cash; we have less than 20 days cash-at-hand. I wouldn't be providing testimony if COLA's and/ or implementation of the finalized rate study for our services were only a question of when. The language in this bill makes it a question of "if" money will be included in the budget or supplemental budgets.

When Rate Reform launched, a majority of the bills coming before this Committee were requests for funding: children, older adults, adults with intellectual disabilities, families in poverty, mental health services... all clamoring to be heard. This committee was the Rate Setting Committee.

As providers without rate predictability, we cannot afford to invest in new OADS initiatives such as LifeSpan or absorb unexpected expenses such as the new Licensing rule which will require us to hire a part-time nurse to oversee all medications, a new compliance person to expand our infection control program and manage the new risk assessment and reporting process outlined in the rule.

Community Support and Employment Providers who have been in business for decades across the State have been asked by the Fire Marshal to install wired fire alarm systems and often sprinkler systems, fire suppression stove hoods, and pay a new registration fee as Adult Day Care providers. Tens of thousands of dollars without reimbursement, unpredicted.

The people we support are struggling. They are seeing new faces every day which doesn't lead to quality support or the opportunity to build a relationship, the cornerstone of good and quality support. Turnover is between 40-45%. For every 3 employees hired, 1 doesn't make it past 3 months, and another doesn't make it past 1 year. Call outs are common and so is burnout from the numerous employees working overtime to fill shifts. In the first 2 years of the Rate Reform System, we saw turnover drop to 22% and employees received meaningful raises; overtime was down to the single digits. It really changes that quickly.

Section 3, Subsection 4 does not preserve the MaineCare Reimbursement System, it pushes the burden of deciding who is most worthy of a rate increase back onto this Committee. Without predictability and consistency in implementing rates, the service structure fails while the codified "reimbursement system" remains pristine on paper. It goes back to being a discretionary system funded based on what feels like luck and

political positioning. I urge you to remove any language in this bill that would make the MaineCare Rate Setting subject to available appropriations.

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