



**Written Testimony of Matt Hickey**

**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 morning,

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Matt Hickey. I am the CEO of Creative Works, a non-profit organization. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to LD 2077 *An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System*.

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

Creative Works is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism, and brain injury. Founded in 1967, Creative Works believes strongly in building communities one relationship, one experience, and one person at a time. We provide a range of services--- including residential, employment, community support, shared living, and case management--- to more than 500 individuals across southern and central Maine. In addition, Creative Works employs more than 350 staff members in York, Cumberland, Androscoggin, and Kennebec counties.

As you know, the current rate-setting framework was established in 2022 with bipartisan support. Section 3, Subsection 4 of LD 2177 *would* make reimbursement adjustments contingent upon appropriations, which is deeply concerning to providers. Following the 2022 legislation, providers received regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for two years. In FY25, legislators intervened to restore a reduced and delayed COLA, and unfortunately, COLAs are not proposed in the FY27 supplemental budget. COLAs are critically important. Because of them, Creative Works has been able to provide Direct Support Professionals with regular wage increases, maintain a healthy benefits package for employees, and expand vital services to those in need.

Without a predictable rate-setting system which includes annual COLAs, I am concerned the system will struggle to sustain high-quality services for those in need. Providers will be forced to make difficult decisions about the services they offer. Workforce challenges will intensify, access to care will be a concern, and the system could be destabilized.



The rate-setting system worked when it was funded. Creative Works' average pay for Direct Support Professionals is now over \$20 an hour, our turnover is under 30%---below industry standards--- and our workforce is currently stable.

Section 3, Subsection 4 of LD2177 puts at risk the progress that Creative Works and other providers have made over the past several years.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Matt Hickey

Chief Executive Officer

Creative Works