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Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 2177

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

February 11, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee of health and Human Services:

My name is Bart Beattie. I am a licensed clinical social worker and the Chief Operating Officer for Spurwink Services, one of Maine's premiere behavioral healthcare and human services not for profit organizations. **I am submitting testimony in opposition to L.D. 2177.** In particular, I object to Subsection 3173-J 4, regarding funding. The changes to this section allows the Department to limit cost of living of adjustments to MaineCare rates based on availability of funding versus the required methodology to adequately support Maine Care member access to services as outlined in 42 United State Code, Section 1396a.

The changes outlined in 3171-J effectively **undo a clear legislative mandate that MaineCare reimbursement rates receive a cost-of-living adjustment applied using a prescribed methodology.** That mandate was enacted to ensure that rates keep pace with the real and unavoidable costs of providing services, particularly labor-driven services that are the safety net for thousands of Mainers.

The changes proposed by L.D. 2077 weaken that mandate by allowing cost-of-living adjustments to be delayed, reduced, or eliminated based on available appropriations, even when provider costs continue to rise. **The predictable result is reimbursement rates that fall below the cost of providing care, forcing providers to limit services, reduce capacity, or exit the MaineCare altogether.**

When MaineCare rates fail to reflect actual costs, access to services is constrained.

This Committee does not need to speculate about the consequences of constrained access—lack of access to required services is precisely what led to the most recent Department of Justice lawsuit and the resulting settlement. Rolling back the COLA mandate moves MaineCare policy in the wrong direction and risks repeating those same failures.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **reject or substantially amend the language in Sections 3 and 4** and preserve the Legislature's intent that MaineCare rates be adjusted using a consistent, predictable cost-of-living methodology that protects access to care.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bart Beattie, LCSW
Chief Operating Officer, Spurwink Services, Inc.

