



Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the joint standing committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the joint standing committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Danielle Charles and I represent AllMed Staffing Of New England and our amazing caregivers. I want to explain why cost-of-living adjustments, or COLAs, are essential for home care agencies serving MaineCare clients. Unlike private-pay services, MaineCare-funded programs cap what agencies can charge for each visit. That means when the cost of doing business goes up wages, insurance, training, transportation, and everything else our reimbursement does not. Without COLAs, we simply do not have the funding to raise caregiver wages, even when the cost of living continues to rise. And this has real consequences.

Personal Support Specialists and direct care workers do some of the most demanding and meaningful work in our communities. They care for older adults and people with disabilities who rely on them every day. But when wages cannot keep up with basic living costs, caregiving becomes less about answering a calling and more about whether someone can afford to stay in the job.

Many caregivers working in MaineCare-funded services must rely on public assistance themselves for health insurance, food, and other basic needs simply to survive. These are hardworking professionals providing essential care, yet reimbursement limits effectively keep their wages so low that they remain dependent on the very support systems their work helps sustain. Without COLAs, the system creates a cycle. Agencies cannot raise pay. Workers cannot achieve financial stability. And more people must rely on public assistance. But if reimbursement allowed wages to rise meaningfully, many caregivers could move toward independence and eventually off subsidies. Supporting the workforce is not just an expense it is a long-term investment in economic stability and reduced reliance on public programs.

COLAs are not a luxury. They are necessary to sustain the workforce, stabilize agencies, and ensure people receive the care they depend on. I urge you to ensure that cost-of-living adjustments are added into the budget as intended by the current rate setting system. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Danielle Charles

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