



Incorporated in 1967

Testimony of Rob Moran, Executive Director, Community Living Association, Houlton Maine
February 17, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, esteemed members of Appropriations Committee.

My name is Rob Moran. I am the Executive Director of Community Living Association in Houlton.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on the supplemental budget. I am submitting testimony to ask for your support to restore and allocate the funding needed for full COLA in Maine Care service rate cost of living adjustments in the supplemental budget.

Community Living Association in Houlton is an agency that was started in 1967 that serves People with Disabilities. We provide group homes, ICF nursing homes for people in medical need, Community Supports, Work Supports, Shared Living and Supported Community Living. Community Living Association employee upwards of 180 employees and serves over 300 people from Bangor to Fort Kent.

For Community Living Association, the lack of a full COLA is a consideration for not adding needed services. If we staff homes and programs we currently have, it's hard to consider expanding services. Lack of staffing can also lead to discontinuing services and programs which has been done a lot recently in Northern Maine in all fields that involve caregivers. Rates need to be enough to be able to pay caregivers more than what they can make in retail or in food service. The level of responsibility a staff in one of our programs has versus other fields is IMMENSE. Caring for another human being is an awesome responsibility. Passing medications, personal care, dealing with behaviors, amongst other things, make the job difficult. It is rewarding work, but by no means easy. Last year CLA was at the early stages of considering adding a home. These homes are sorely needed here in the county. All the large agencies (Northern Maine General, Danforth Habilitations, Central Aroostook Association, and us) have reduced homes and or bed capacity significantly in the last few years. The lack of a COLA stopped this from potentially moving forward. I won't say it was the only factor, but it was a factor.

There have been times that residents have had to move to southern Maine due to their homes closing. Imagine being a person with disabilities having to move from one end of the state to the other due to an agency having to close a home due to a staffing shortage. This has happened. The decision to not fund a COLA make it more likely that additional Aroostook homes close. This would make that scenario more likely. With more programs downsizing and possibly closing, the opportunities to stay in the county for people with disabilities is dwindling. The lack of a regularly scheduled full COLA makes it harder to retain staff.

I mentioned above that the lack of a COLA also means increased competition from retail and food businesses for employees. It means that our starting wage increases by a much smaller amount. I say this again because both of these business types can raise the price of their goods, in order to

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raise wages and stay well-staffed without losing profit. CLA and agencies like ours are completely dependent on rates as you all know.

At CLA, we are planning on still doing some type of raise for our front-line caregivers. Whatever we do will be less than it would be with a COLA that was funded. All our costs have increased during the past year, like every other business in the state. The difference is, as I mentioned before, most of them can raise their prices. I know all people on the committee have been inundated with requests for money from all kinds of places, I would say to you that there's nothing more important to build a healthy workforce of caregivers, Maine is an aging state and there needs to be a robust workforce of Care Givers moving forward. Funding the full COLA will be a step in that direction.

Please fund the full COLA for all MaineCare rates in the supplemental budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

[Your Name]

[Email]

Agency Website if not on your letterhead

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