

Wendy Fenderson
Limerick
LD 2212

Testimony on LD 2212

Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and Health and Human Services

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer,
and distinguished members of the Committees:

My name is Wendy L. Fenderson, and I reside in Limerick, Maine. I am submitting
testimony regarding LD 2212, the supplemental budget.

Over the course of this hearing, you have heard compelling testimony from mental
health workers, nurses, parents, providers, and small business owners. Their
experiences are real. Their concerns are sincere. The strain within Maine's publicly
funded care systems is undeniable.

At the same time, the themes reflected in this testimony are not new. They represent
persistent concerns that have been brought before this Legislature for many years —
across administrations, across budget cycles, and across changing leadership.

Workforce shortages, burnout, reimbursement pressures, rising acuity, turnover in
direct care positions, and instability in behavioral health settings are recurring issues
that continue to surface session after session.

That reality raises an important governance question:

Are we confronting a fixable structural flaw, or are we managing a chronic condition
inherent in publicly funded care systems?

If the strain is structural, then additional funding alone will not resolve misalignment
within reimbursement systems, retirement classifications, or workforce design. If the
strain is chronic — the natural tension of labor-intensive services funded through
public programs — then even well-crafted reforms will not eliminate ongoing
pressure.

In either case, incremental appropriations layered onto longstanding challenges may
provide temporary relief, but not lasting resolution.

This is not an argument against supporting essential services. Nor is it a dismissal of
the risks described by frontline workers or the instability experienced by families. It
is, rather, a call for clarity and long-term strategy.

Before committing surplus funds to recurring obligations, it may be prudent to ask:

- What measurable structural changes accompany this investment?
- What outcomes define stabilization?
- What accountability mechanisms ensure that today's appropriation reduces
tomorrow's emergency appeal?
- How will the Legislature evaluate whether these recurring challenges are
meaningfully addressed?

Public trust is strengthened when appropriations are paired with transparent objectives
and durable planning.

LD 2212 represents more than a supplemental spending decision. It presents an
opportunity to evaluate whether Maine is addressing root causes or continuing a cycle
of annual stabilization without systemic evaluation.

I respectfully encourage this body to consider not only the urgency presented today,
but also the persistence of these concerns over time, and to ensure that any investment
made is part of a deliberate, sustainable strategy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wendy L. Fenderson
Limerick, Maine