



**Written Testimony of the  
Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Council of Maine  
February 17, 2026**

Neither for nor Against

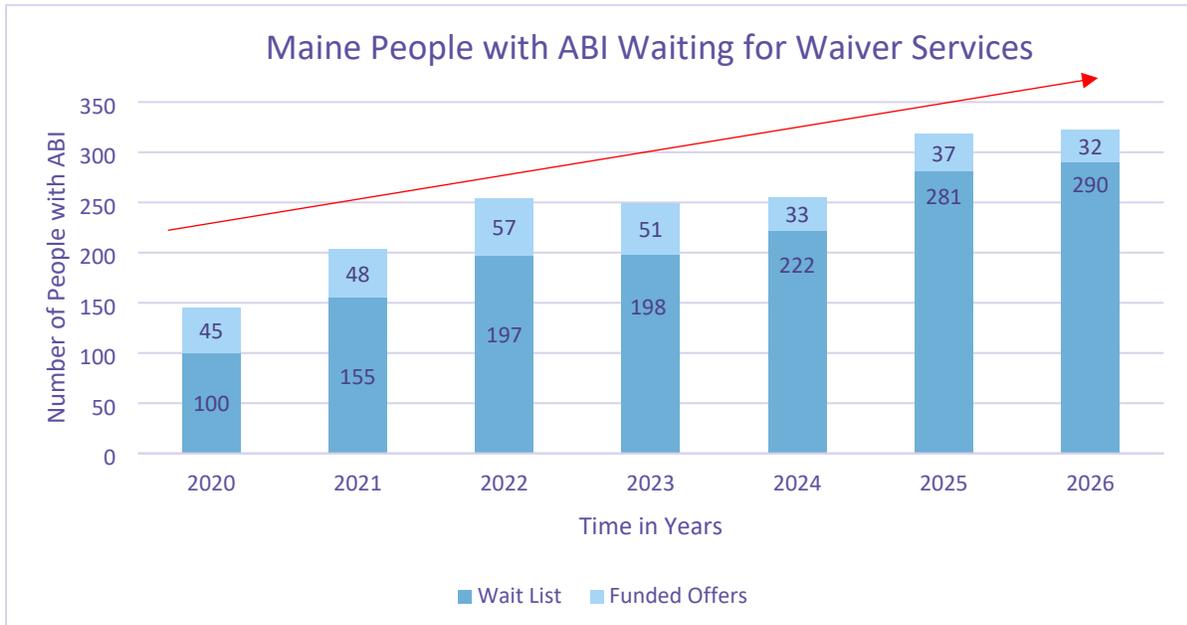
*LD 2212 " An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027."*

Dear Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of both the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees:

On behalf of the Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Council (ABIAC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the supplemental budget. Formed in 2002 to support a grant and later established in statute, the ABIAC has been in existence to provide recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Legislature for over 20 years. The ABIAC has two comments about LD 2212 for the Legislature's consideration.

First, we appreciate that the Governor's supplemental budget includes funding for Section 18 Brain Injury Waiver services. We support this investment and recognize it as an important acknowledgment of the needs of individuals living with brain injuries. However, the proposed amount is modest and does not adequately address the growing demand for services. As of February 9, 2026, 290 individuals remain on the waitlist for the Brain Injury Waiver. Alarming, 69 percent of those individuals receive no other services while they wait. The average wait time is currently 4.6 years, an unacceptably long period for individuals and families who rely on these supports to live safely and independently in their communities.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to allocate additional funding specifically earmarked for the Brain Injury Waiver to expand the number of funded offers. Without a stronger investment, individuals with brain injuries will continue to go without critical services for years, often at greater long-term costs.



Second, ensuring access to services and the recognition of barriers to access, including workforce, has long been a published priority of the Council. Toward that end, the Council wishes to honor and acknowledge the past work of the Maine Legislature to establish annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) as well as to ensure that the labor component of MaineCare rates reached 125% of the minimum wage. These were important steps in workforce stabilization and preventing additional group home closures during the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature and we applaud those earlier efforts.

Given that important infrastructure work provided under Maine law 22 M.R.S.A [§3173-J](#), we are greatly concerned about omissions of funding for COLAs in FY27 in the budget as required in statute, and we ask for the Legislature’s support in remedying the situation by including a 3.1% COLA.

Having predictable annual COLAs as well as rates that support the wages consistent with the market and that keep pace with inflation are critical to support Maine’s most vulnerable citizens. It is relevant to note here that brain injury survivors and their families are the ones that will shoulder the burden of Maine’s dwindling workforce, a workforce that will be further depleted if there is not hope for wage adjustments in the next few years. And the 4.6 year wait list for services will likely grow longer.

The Council requests your support to restore and allocate the funding needed for annual COLAs for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027. Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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