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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Testimony of Senator Jeffrey Timberlake

LD 251, "Resolve, To Classify Employee Health Insurance as a Fixed Cost for MaineCare Reimbursement in Nursing Facilities"

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

February 7, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: I am Jeff Timberlake and I represent Senate District 17, which includes the Towns of Durham, Greene, Leeds, Lisbon, Litchfield, Sabattus, Turner, Wales, and Wayne.

It is my pleasure to be here to present LD 251, "Resolve, To Classify Employee Health Insurance as a Fixed Cost for MaineCare Reimbursement in Nursing Facilities."

Those of you who sat on this Committee the past couple sessions may recall I stood before you twice before and presented this same bill, LD 1126 from the 129th Legislature and LD 1112 from the 130th. The measures ultimately died but not for lack of interest or support. In the 129th, the session ended early because of the pandemic, in the 130th, this Committee voted unanimously in support of the bill but we came up short in funding at AFA.

To provide a little background, back in December of 2013 the bipartisan Commission to Study Long Term Care Facilities released a series of recommendations, several of which were implemented. One recommendation by the Commission that has not yet been put in place is to make health insurance a fixed cost in nursing homes. Facilities generally do offer health insurance to employees, but this has become extremely difficult because of the rising premium costs.

We must keep in mind that now more than ever, with Maine's population being the oldest in the nation, nursing homes need to be able to attract and retain the best employees; and this can be done with competing wages and benefits.

Two prior iterations of this Committee reported out the same proposal unanimously. It is my hope this panel will again send this measure to the Chambers with a report to pass. We need to show our support for nursing home facilities and the hardworking staff who take care of our friends, neighbors and family members.

I appreciate your attention and will try to answer questions. However, folks who will be testifying after me are much better versed than I at explaining the different aspects of MaineCare rates and reimbursements; and they have a better handle on the intricacies of Chapter 101 of the MaineCare Benefits Manual, the piece this Resolve proposes to amend.

Thank you for your time and consideration.