



TESTIMONY OF SKIP GREENLAW REGARDING THAT PORTION OF LD #258
PERTAINING TO THE FUNDING OF LONG TERM RESIDENTIAL CARE

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Skip Greenlaw. Like many of you, I come from a rural and remote part of Maine. I live in Stonington and operate Stonington Seafood Express, a small wholesale seafood business. I served in the 106th, 107th and 108th Maine House of Representatives. The best job of my life was working for Governor Joseph Brennan on his staff for 3 and one-half years. I am testifying today on behalf of the Island Nursing Home (INH) where I serve on the Board of Directors, and on behalf of nursing homes across the State.

The INH is a community-based, non-profit facility located in Deer Isle. We serve primarily residents of seven towns on the Blue Hill Peninsula- Stonington, Deer Isle, Isle au Haut, Blue Hill, Sedgwick, Brooklin, and Brooksville. All of these towns, like many of the towns you represent, have a high concentration of low to moderate income senior citizens dependent on Medicaid, also known as MaineCare.

Unfortunately, the difficult challenge that I am going to discuss with you today is not unique to us; indeed the elder care crisis that we are confronting on the Peninsula is endemic throughout Maine. I would wager that each of you have a sizeable and growing number of seniors in your districts who are facing increasingly dire circumstances just like those faced by the elderly in our Peninsula communities.

In October 2021, we had to close the INH and find new homes for our remaining 55 skilled nursing and residential care seniors. We had lost 14 residents to COVID in 2020. On top of an already dire staffing situation, 23 of our employees resigned due to Governor Mills' vaccination mandate, and staffing agencies announced they could no longer find direct care staff for us. The reason why we had to close was lack of appropriate staff to care for the residents. Closing was and remains a painful decision.

We are not alone. Maine has the nation's highest concentration of elderly citizens, yet, **23 or 20% of our nursing homes have completely closed their doors since 2014.** I am attaching a list of them for your perusal. I plead with you to close the gap between nursing homes' costs of service and reimbursement so that we don't lose the homes we have left. There are only 89 remaining, and we are all struggling. Here's why:

Every single nursing home in Maine faces a widening gap- now really a chasm- between the cost of providing care to our low income residents and the level of MaineCare reimbursement from the State. Overall inflation and a statewide shortage of nurses are driving up our costs at a blinding pace, but the level of reimbursement is lagging badly. INH has served the community for 40 years by keeping our census as full as possible, creating a small economy of scale. We have lost nurses and other required staff to retirement, to a lack of suitable housing, and to competition from contract or traveling nurse employment opportunities. We can't afford to provide skilled nursing care, and we can't afford even to provide rudimentary cost of residential care beds.

We have worked hard for more than a year to figure out how to reopen the Island Nursing Home. Because we cannot recruit or pay registered nurses, or house them even if we could hire them, we have decided to reopen the facility without any skilled nursing care beds and only with 32 residential care beds.

We are planning to run a tight ship with just an administrator, one registered nurse, 11 aides, and appropriate support personnel, 22 in all. We believe that we can hire these personnel from employees who worked for INH previously. Nonetheless, our cost of providing care will be \$220 per patient per day. However, our reimbursement from DHHS will only be \$120 or less. We estimate that we will run an annual deficit of more than a half million dollars.

The board has decided not to reopen until we have raised \$1.5 million in public and municipal donations to cover the estimated deficits for three years. We know as well as you do that fund raising isn't a responsible way to operate over the long haul, but we have chosen this course because **there are no alternatives for the seniors in our towns who need care.** One of the closest options, a facility, an hour away in Ellsworth, has an 80 person waiting list for residential care beds.

So we simply will reopen the INH, even at a reduced level of care. Our goal is to reestablish skilled care beds when more nurses become available and when the State of Maine fills the funding gap so that we can afford to hire and house nurses.

The \$25 million that the legislature added to the long term care line in the supplemental FY 2023 budget of course was helpful for those facilities currently open. Those funds and hopefully more must added to the FY 2024 and FY 2025 budget if these needed nursing homes are to remain solvent and serve the needs of our aging population.

Nursing homes across the State can't wait until 2025 for DHHS to make its recommendations for much needed reforms of the nursing home funding structure. Few or none of those homes that have closed will reopen. I can guarantee that more homes will be faced with bankruptcy unless you act to increase significantly the reimbursement for long term care.

Representative Lynne Williams and other members of the Hancock County delegation will introduce legislation that would reimburse residential care facilities for 100% of their costs, and I urge you to support that legislation.

I thank you very much for your attention and interest. I know from serving on this committee some years ago how many worthy pleas you hear from the citizens of our State and how many difficult and competing demands you must reconcile.

I hope that my testimony has informed you..... and that it has moved you to take further action on behalf of Maine seniors. I pray that you will provide sufficient funding that will permit our remaining nursing facilities to continue serving the needs of growing number of Mainers who depend on them, who need care, and who cannot otherwise afford to obtain it.

Members of our board will gladly make ourselves available at work sessions if you desire. My cell is 460-1260, email- skipg@midmaine.com.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you have.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Skip Greenlaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

February 22, 2023

List of Maine Nursing Homes Closed since 2014

2014	Oceanview	Lubec	Washington
2014	Penobscot Nursing Home	Penobscot	Hancock
2014	Sebastcook Valley Health Care	Pittsfield	Somerset
2015	St. Joseph's Nursing Home	Frenchville	Aroostook
2016	Winthrop House	Winthrop	Kennebec
2017	Jackman Regional Health Center	Jackman	Somerset
2018	Bridgeton Health Center	Bridgton	Cumberland
2018	Freeport Nursing Home	Freeport	Cumberland
2018	Fryeburg Health Center	Fryeburg	Oxford
2018	Ledgeview	West Paris	Oxford
2018	Mountain Heights Health Care	Patten	Penobscot
2018	Sunrise Care Facility	Jonesport	Washington
2019	Sonogee Rehab & Living Center	Bar Harbor	Hancock
2020	Sandy River Center (NF operating, residential care closed)	<i>Farmington</i>	<i>Franklin</i>
2021	Colonial Health Care (conversion to residential care)	Lincoln	Penobscot
2021	Country Manor Nursing Home	Coopers Mills	Waldo
2021	Evergreen Manor	Saco	York
2021	Island Nursing Home	Deer Isle	Hancock
2021	Somerset Manor	Bingham	Somerset
2021	Shaw House	Biddeford	York
2021	Anchor Senior Care Residence	Springville	York
2021	Marcoux Waiver House	Eagle Lake	Aroostook
2021	Mapleton Waiver Home	Mapleton	Aroostook
2021	Franciscan Home	Eagle Lake	Aroostook
2022	Gardiner Health Care (NF closed, residential care open)	Houlton	Aroostook
2022	Washington Manor (NF closed, residential care open)	Washington	Knox
2023	Windham Residential Care	Windham	Cumberland

27 nursing homes since 2014 closed or partially closed.

4 nursing homes since 2014 partially operating

23 completely closed since 2014

Sources: Berry, Dunn, PA

Maine Health Care Association