



Care From The Heart

## Testimony in Support of

### LD 208, An Act Concerning Home Care Services

April 10, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Tammy Polakowski. I am a resident of Hermon, Maine and I serve as the Assistant Director of Nursing/Northern Maine of COR Health Services. We are also a member of the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine.

We provide private duty nursing to adults and children with disabilities. Sections 19 & 96. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 208, An Act Concerning Home Care Services. I wish to thank Rep. Craven for sponsoring this important bill.

I feel I am qualified to voice my support on LD 208 as I have worked as an RN in an Intermediate Care Facility serving children and adults with disabilities, worked for the Bangor School Dept as an RN in the multi-handicap program, served as the camp nurse at Camp Capella, worked as a field nurse, nurse coordinator and now ADON for Cor Health Services. All these positions have put me on the front lines with parents and their children for many years and in many different situations. Even though I can't walk in their shoes and know how they feel being the parent of a disabled child, I can certainly attest to what they go through on a daily basis and the effect of not having consistent caregivers.

As an agency we would like to see accountability and transparency for all children and adults with disabilities in the State of Maine and the nursing services they are or aren't receiving. For section 96 (under 21 private duty nursing) 47 % of eligible are receiving partial or no services. By putting them on a dashboard, such as the one used for Section 28, we would be able to identify geographic areas in need and hire staff more appropriately to fill these needs. Getting these clients assessed and on a waitlist would be a game changer for families that have lost all hope. Some may say assessing a client only to be put on a waitlist would be discouraging for them, but where would you rather be if you were in their shoes? On a waitlist or not at all and potentially missed all together?. Clients would also be pulled from the waitlist not in order but based on geographic location, needs, and available hours. All information that we have no access to under the current system.

*I would like to present two scenarios based on my experiences as an RN that has taken calls from parents, assessed clients, recruited and hired caregivers for these positions.*

*First, a parent calls from Houlton Maine. (very rural and hard to staff) Their child has been born and is trach dependent with ventilator support. The parents are distraught because not only do they need staff so they can work, they need the education and training that this diagnosis requires. But, I have no one in the area. I can recommend they reach out to another agency. I cannot share their information with anyone else due to HIPPA. I will put them on my list as a referral. 9/10 will never call another agency. This is how they get lost in the cracks.*

*LD 208 Utilizing the State's assessing services agency scenario*

*Second, The same family calls the state assessing agency. An assessor from that agency does an assessment. Based on the child's condition, they are given 168 hours per week (24/7) nursing. They would then go on the waitlist. At this point any agency can staff those hours if they have a caregiver. We can also put ads out based on the fact that there are 168 hours per week. We would not do that or hire staff without the waitlist and knowing they had been approved for hours. They will remain on the waitlist and continue to be tracked until staff can be found. We can also use the data from the waitlist to be able to know where to focus on our recruiting efforts.*

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this important legislation to keep home care patients safe. I welcome any questions that you have.

Name: Tammy Polakowski RN  
Title: Assistant director of Nursing  
Organization: COR Health Services  
Email: [tpolakowski@corhealthservices.com](mailto:tpolakowski@corhealthservices.com)  
Telephone: 207-478-3292