

Testimony on LD 208, “An Act Concerning Home Care Services,” and LD 1238, “An Act to Require Reporting on the Percentage of Approved Care Being Delivered to Individuals”

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Arthur Phillips, Economic Policy Analyst, Maine Center for Economic Policy

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Arthur Phillips, and I am an analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy.

As we all know, there is a chronic under-supply of direct care workers to provide supports and services to older Mainers and people with disabilities. I am here to voice support for LD 208 and LD 1238, both of which would improve our assessment of the challenges Mainers face accessing the care they need, and would inform what steps we must take to address these challenges.

We believe low pay and low reimbursement rates are the fundamental sources of our chronic shortage of direct care. The impact of undervaluing care work is, of course, felt most directly by care workers themselves and the people they serve; however, it effects our economy in myriad ways, as the task of juggling work and care responsibilities pulls people out of the labor force. These broader employment impacts harm families, workers, employers, the health care sector, the State’s revenue base, and our overall economic prosperity. We at the Maine Center for Economic Policy will release a report this month that illustrates the enormous costs to our state of undervaluing this work.

Improving the information and data available for assessing the direct care shortage is critical for being able to solve it. The Department of Health and Human services’ annual progress report on implementation of recommendations from the 2019 workforce commission, otherwise known as the AAAA report, provides some helpful information; however, the report is only provided once each year and is not detailed enough to accurately portray our state’s needs. Making sure there is comprehensive data on waiting lists and the extent of approved care which Mainers are not receiving will improve our collective ability to adequately resolve the challenges we face.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.

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