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**THE MAINE SENATE**  
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Richard A. Bennett**

In Support of LD 744, "Resolve, to Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to Perform Rate Studies and Rate Determinations for Providers of Certain Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder"

13 April 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor LD 744, "Resolve, to Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to Perform Rate Studies and Rate Determinations for Providers of Certain Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder."

The Maine Legislature has made it a priority to clear the waitlists for adults with developmental disabilities seeking services they are entitled to. Part of the problem has been a shortage of staff to offer services. The supplemental budget from the 130<sup>th</sup> legislature included an initiative that increased the minimum wage of workers to 125% of the minimum wage. Yet, before that wage increase took effect, the Department adopted a new rate model for this service that actually **cut** the percentage of the rate that supports program costs by 40%. The new rate does not support program costs and employers have continued to experience staff loss.

Upwards of 70 homes have closed in the last two years forcing countless MaineCare members to seek services elsewhere, sometimes far away from family and friends. It is time the Department of Health and Human Services conduct rate studies and rate determinations for MaineCare Waiver Section 21 & 29 services. This simply can't wait any longer. Vulnerable Mainers need their services and in my opinion, having even one person on a waitlist is unacceptable. Proper funding and reimbursement is imperative if we ever hope to properly serve this population.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.