



*Incorporated in 1967*

April 13, 2023

Rob Moran, Community Living Association, Houlton Maine

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Rob Moran, I'm the Executive Director of Community Living Association in Houlton Maine. CLA provides Community Supports, Group Homes and ICF Residential Services, Shared Living Services, Case Management, and Work Supports. We are primarily located in Houlton and surrounding towns but do case management out of an office in Bangor. CLA has been in business since 1967 serving people with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of LD 744 which would direct DHHS to conduct rate studies in 2024 for Maine Care HCBS Group Homes and Community Supports and Community membership services for people with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder. This bill would also direct the department to establish a work group to determine a daily rate for Group Home services and adjust the minimum staffing level to 85% after the appendix K Waiver ends in November and before new rates would be available in January 2025.

When I started out as a DSP over thirty years ago, the pay rate was enough that it attracted me to give this field a try. Little did I know that this would become my life's work. I've seen some wonderful things take place during the last thirty years. The closure of Pineland, the elimination of time out rooms and a huge push for rights and inclusion for the people we serve to name a few. I must tell you though that I'm worried, worried for the people we serve and the services we provide. In Aroostook County the past five years a total of eight homes have closed. The homes we have closed were all accessible. At least a couple more that I know of have reduced beds. These are all due to lack of staffing. Agencies can't meet staff levels with more homes and keep people safe, so they reduce homes. At CLA last year we closed a home and I have managers that think we need to close another. I have drawn a line in the sand for now because I don't think these beds are coming back. Most Executives I talk to feel the same way.

When we closed a home last year, one of the people served ended up moving to the southern part of the state to a group home with a new agency. When he arrived, he found that most of the house was not wheelchair accessible, there was no accessible van, and in fact there was very little food in the house. Can you imagine being a person with disabilities and having to move hours away from your parents and family into that situation? Can you imagine how hard it is on their family?

Administrative offices: 45 School Street, Houlton, Maine 04730  
207-532-9446 ~ 866-843-4144 ~ Fax 207-532-1359 ~ [www.cla-maine.org](http://www.cla-maine.org)

Community Living Association is a non-discriminatory organization and an Equal Opportunity Employer

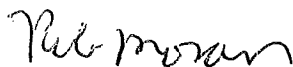
In Aroostook county many of the providers do “in-home” supports, meaning staff come in to a person’s home or apartment to help make sure they are able to live safely on their own with a few staffing hours each week. Due to the agency being down so many staff in their group home program, they needed to move people from being able to essentially support themselves in the community to living in group home programs. For some people this may mean they are unable to live by themselves and will need to be placed in a group home. A much more expensive option for the state and that’s if they can even find a bed.

I appreciate the Department’s efforts to invest in workforce development, the COLA’s received to date (which really helped to retain staff, not necessarily to recruit) and the flexibilities to date, however a viable rate that sustains a competitive wage, is critical and can’t wait. We are using large amounts of overtime in order to staff the homes we currently have. Many of our homes have eggshell thin staffing margins.

Most of our best staff are all twenty-thirty year employees who are aging into retirement. This is an issue for most agencies that I know. I know all businesses are having trouble getting staff, but in our business, for most of the people we serve there is no plan B.

I urge your support. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Rob Moran

532-9446 x1115

[rmoran@cla-maine.org](mailto:rmoran@cla-maine.org)