



In Support of LD 744

An Act to Ensure Access to Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities by Requiring Rate Studies for Home and Community-based Services.

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

April 13, 2023

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

My name is Michaela York. I am the Executive Director of Mobius, Inc. Mobius is a non-profit agency that supports adults and children with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and Autism in greater Lincoln County, Maine. Mobius was created by parents of those with ID and Autism in 1978. That means we are celebrating our 45th year.

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 MaineCare HCBS Group Home 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 help 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.

Faced with a rate that does not support a competitive wage, providers have experienced high staff loss and homes continue to close and collapse. An estimated 75 homes have closed in the last two years disrupting hundreds of MaineCare members, often uprooting them from the nearby family and communities where they have made and built trusting relationships and meaningful lives.

I wanted to give you two examples of how the closing of group homes has affected some Mainecare Members.

1. A middle -aged male with Autism/IDD- had been receiving group home services with 24-hour staffing at Agency A for over 10 years. Prior to that he lived with his family in a small Coastal town, attending local schools and programs. He came from a well-known family of generations of lobstermen. His mother and father recently passed away, and before they passed, they requested that Male client remain in his hometown area in a group living arrangement. Agency A kept that promise for several years. However, due to the loss of staff, the agency had to close this client's group home. This client was used to the same staff for at least the past 4 years and had a solid schedule that made him feel safe. The client's case manager researched all living options and was able to find a home in a community over 30 miles away. He moved to that group home and started to settle in. It has since been reported that the group home has closed due to lack of staffing, and the case manager has found this individual another group home over



45 miles away from his original hometown location. Once again, this client's world has been thrown into chaos and he is even further away from his home community.

2. An elderly female with Autism/IDD- had lived in the same group residence with the same agency for over 40 years. This was the only home she had known. She is elderly now and showing signs of dementia. The Agency had to close the group home she was living in due to lack of staffing. The client's case manager searched out several group home locations and found another agency about 30 miles away. The client was placed in that home. That agency lost staff at the home but were able to re-staff the home. In the meantime, the client's health started to decline, and she ended up with serious pressure sores on her feet. Now this client will be moved to yet another facility which provides more medical care. She would have preferred to stay in the home and community she had known for over 40 years.

Since the new HCBS Waiver rules were adopted, Mobius began providing Community Membership Services instead of Community Supports. This service is intended to support individualized services fully in the community, without a facility hub. To continue to provide this service, and do it well, an adequate rate is needed. To determine this rate, a rate study that includes data from IDD providers, not data from other service providers as a benchmark, is needed.

I appreciate the Department's efforts to invest in workforce development, the cost-of-living adjustments, and flexibility received to date; however, a viable rate, that will sustain a competitive wage, is critical and cannot wait.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michaela P. York". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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