

Testimony before the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Health and Human Services on

LD 2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

Public Hearing: Monday, February 26, 2024 at 10:00 AM

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci, and Representative Meyer, as well as Distinguished Members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Health and Human Services:

I would like to introduce myself, I am April Nichols BSN, MLA I am the Quality Improvement Manager for First Atlantic Health Care. I have worked in long term care for over 30 years in the state of Maine providing care for one of our most vulnerable populations. This aging population is only growing. This is not a time to turn our backs on the aged population of Maine.

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to LD 2214 as it does not provide enough funding for nursing homes and residential care facilities to continue providing care in Maine. Our industry has seen over 23 closures of nursing facilities since 2014, nine of which have occurred in the last three years. The funding shortfall is significant. For nursing homes, the 2022 shortfall is \$96.5 million for nursing homes and \$24 million for residential care facilities. This supplemental budget includes just \$10 million to address this significant gap.

- The work we do helps residents and families. We help residents maintain their highest level of function, and we afford family members the ability to continue to work and know their family member is safe and well cared for. The data tells us that not only are our numbers of elders growing, in tandem we see increased numbers of residents with some level of dementia decreasing their ability to live in in the community independently.
- Our elders want to continue to live in the communities they have spent all of their lives living in. Facility closures have significant impact on this as families may have to drive hours to see loved ones which does not allow for frequent visits and leaves our elders feeling isolated and lonely. This cannot continue in Maine.
- This industry is riddled with challenges we cannot continue to spend all of our time chasing the funding issue we have bigger issues to deal with that effect quality of resident care. These may include:
 - Staffing shortages
 - Lack of nurse educators in the state and aging nurses without replacements.
 - Staff are leaving to work in other health care sectors or for temporary nurse agencies with better pay
 - Lack of medical providers to be medical directors especially in the more rural areas.

In conclusion, nursing homes are important for Maine, and significantly more funding is necessary. Without additional support from the legislature, more families will lose access to important

health care in their community as more facilities will close. Thank you for listening to my concerns, please consider adequate funding to allow our elders to stay and be cared for in the communities that they have lived all of their lives.

Best Regards
April Nichols BSN, MLA
Quality Improvement Manager
First Atlantic Healthcare