

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:

My name is Jessica Duffy, and I have been a registered nurse since 2002 and although I have worked in a variety of settings throughout my career, I have spent a significant amount of time working in the long-term care sector.

In my current role, I serve as the Executive Director of Affinity Care of Maine. We provide hospice care in York and Cumberland Counties in a variety of settings from private residences to assisted living facilities to nursing facilities. This is an extremely rewarding profession and I absolutely love being a nurse. My husband has come to know that when he asks when I will be home at night, I always respond, "When my work is done".

And today, I am here to say that the work is not done. Our residential care and nursing facilities are struggling, and our older Mainers are feeling the brunt of it. We have patients who have been in hospitals for several months, sometimes even much longer, awaiting placement in facilities. We have older adults with dementia being sent to the ER alone without anyone to advocate for them. We have husbands and wives who have been married for over 60 years and are separated because they need to access different levels of care.

Stop and imagine that it was your mother, your sister, your aunt who needed 24-hour care, and you couldn't find a safe place for her. And once you found a place, what if there weren't enough people to care for those in need? Or what if that place was forced to close?

Our colleagues in long term care are physically and emotionally exhausted. With staffing shortages and underfunding, many are left waking up each day feeling like their best isn't enough. Countless staff get multiple calls daily because facilities are short-staffed, leaving caregivers who are working parents to choose between staying for a longer shift to care for their 50-100 residents who need them, or going home to make dinner for their kids, help them with their homework, and put them to bed.

We can stand around all day pointing fingers and talking about what is wrong in long term care. But here's the fact - we need bold action from lawmakers in Augusta because we are at the brink.

I leave you with this question - How do you want to be cared for when you can no longer care for yourself? If something is not done to stop closures and short-staffing situations, we may not be able to deliver the care we all want and deserve. I implore you to dedicate the resources needed to protect access to long term care in Maine.

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