

**Testimony in Support of The Governor's Supplemental Budget – LD 209
January 23, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, and Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of both the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Committee on Health and Human Services. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Eric Meyer. I am a resident of Whitefield and the President & CEO of Spurwink Services. At Spurwink, we provide behavioral health and educational services to over 10,000 Maine children, adults, and families across our state with over 1,000 Maine employees.



I am here today to speak in support of the Governor's Supplemental Budget, LD 209. I recognize the challenging budget environment we are in and appreciate the Governor's supplemental budget proposal to address the \$118 million MaineCare funding shortfall. By funding this shortfall, the supplemental budget ensures that providers can continue to receive timely payments, maintain stability, and deliver high-quality care to our communities without interruption.

I know this hearing is specifically about MaineCare and the supplemental budget. Relatedly, I'd like to note two areas of deep concern in the broader budget conversations as a placeholder. I am deeply concerned over the DHHS decision to not implement MaineCare cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) in either budget as required by law. This decision came as a shock to us and our colleagues across the State. Spurwink relies on these COLAs during years between rate determination cycles to give wage increases for essential care and support workers and ensure that services are maintained. After years, sometimes decades of neglect, COLAs have enabled MaineCare reimbursement rates to begin catching up. Considering the ongoing behavioral health direct care workforce shortage, these COLAs are invaluable for Spurwink to meet the critical behavioral health needs of our state. When it is time to consider the biennial budget, I will respectfully urge the committees to not accept the line in the Governor's biennial budget proposal that alters how COLAs are assessed and to pass a biennial budget that fully funds MaineCare COLAs.

In addition I will request that the committees include funding in the biennial budget to allow the full implementation of the state's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program. CCBHCs are a transformative approach to community behavioral health that have already begun to improve access and address long-standing gaps in care. Spurwink is deeply committed to this program. Thank you for considering funding this critical service.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon and for your leadership and commitment to the health and wellbeing of your constituents and our communities.

Respectfully submitted,

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