



**Testimony of Ben Hawkins, Director of Public Affairs
Maine Health Care Association**

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

LD 209, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

Public Hearing: Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Gattine and 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 Ben Hawkins, and I serve as the Director of Public Affairs for the Maine Health Care Association. We represent approximately 200 nursing homes, assisted living centers, and residential care facilities across the state. Our mission is to empower members to ensure the integrity, quality, and sustainability of long term care in Maine.

Given Maine's paramount need to fulfill its Medicaid commitments, I am testifying in support of the proposed supplemental budget.

Ensuring that MaineCare remains functional and fully funded is critical for the health and well-being of our state's most vulnerable populations, including older adults and individuals with disabilities. While we cannot confirm that the proposed \$117.6 million allocation to MaineCare will directly benefit nursing homes and residential care facilities, we know a stable MaineCare system is necessary to sustain access across all sectors. Without a functional MaineCare program, the entire continuum is at risk.

We view this supplemental budget as an opportunity to address current needs, while the upcoming biennial budget is the opportunity for fundamental change. With the closure announcement in Eagle Lake just last week, Maine has seen the loss of 29 nursing homes and 28 residential care facilities since

2014. Although rate reform is making some of the many improvements needed to support nursing facilities, the transition is far from complete and still needs stable, long-term investment. Moreover, residential care facilities' rate redesign or meaningful rate increases have yet to even happen.

Our long term care providers are committed to delivering compassionate care to those who need it, but we simply cannot with insufficient funding. On behalf of the Maine Health Care Association and the residents, families, and caregivers we serve, I respectfully ask you to support this supplemental budget and work with us to sustain Maine's long term care system in the imminent 2026-2027 budget cycle.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.