



61 Winthrop Street • Augusta, ME 04330  
1-800-499-0229 • Fax 207-621-0509  
MLTCOP@MaineOmbudsman.org

**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**

**IN SUPPORT**

**January 23, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Laura Harper. I am a Senior Associate at Moose Ridge Associates. I am pleased to be here to provide testimony in support of the Supplemental Budget on behalf of the Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. As you know, the Ombudsman Program provides advocacy for older and disabled residents of nursing homes, residential care and assisted living and for recipients of home care services.

Funding included in the Supplemental Budget to fill the gap in MaineCare is critical to supporting services for older and disabled Mainers who need long-term services and supports. In fact, many Home and Community Based Services rely heavily on timely MaineCare payments. Every day, our staff see the great value of this program in providing access to care across long term services and supports. The services it funds in the community may delay or prevent care in a higher cost setting. These services also provide critical support for family caregivers. For this reason, we urge you to support this budget.

However, we feel compelled to also comment on the importance of implementing the annual cost of living adjustment for MaineCare programs that serve older adults, and people with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities. As you know, the direct care staffing crisis has impacted access to care across long-term services and supports. As a result of our work with members of the Direct Care and Support Professional Advisory Council, we know that wages and benefits are a primary concern for direct care and support staff. Adequate wages are critical in recruitment and retention of staff.

In conclusion, without the MaineCare funding included in this budget, consumers of long-term care, providers, and those who directly provide the care, will suffer. It will lead to poor health outcomes and exacerbate the existing workforce shortage. Please support this budget.

Thank you for your consideration.