



Testimony of Allisha Prindall, Fairfield, ME

LD 210: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027

**Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee & Health and Human Services Committee
February 12, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of both the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees, my name is Allisha Prindall, and I am a Team Leader at SKILLS, Inc. I live in Fairfield, and I have worked in the intellectual disabilities (ID) and mental health field for the past 10 years. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the biennial budget.

I am here to ask you—plead with you—to restore and allocate funding for cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for MaineCare services in the biennial budget, LD 210.

In my 10 years of experience in this field, I have witnessed firsthand the difference that quality care and dedicated support can make in the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism, and mental health challenges. The most rewarding part of my job is seeing the incredible growth of the individuals I support. These are not just tasks they are learning—they are gaining independence. Whether it's learning to cook, doing their laundry, getting a job, learning to drive, or even using a debit card for the first time, these milestones are more than just personal achievements—they are life-changing moments that provide dignity, self-respect, and a sense of purpose. This is why I am here today: to ensure that the staff who support these individuals can continue to provide this vital care.

I cannot express enough how deeply concerned I am about the suspension of the COLA for MaineCare rates. We are facing a staffing crisis that jeopardizes the care and services these individuals deserve. As it stands, there are times when homes that support 6 individuals are staffed by only 1 person. This results in not only the loss of community integration but also the complete lack of the activities and support these individuals need. The work we do is essential, but with such low wages, we cannot maintain staff, and high turnover is inevitable. People are leaving our field every day for better-paying jobs, and in my case, I personally work 55 to 65 hours a week just to make ends meet.



I work long hours just to pay my bills and take care of my children. I don't get to see my children much at all because I'm constantly working to stay afloat. In addition to this, I'm enrolled in college, studying for an Associate's degree in Psychology, which I will be graduating with in May. However, managing school, work, and family life has become nearly impossible. If I cannot afford to keep up with basic needs, how am I supposed to continue my education, let alone take care of my children?

Let me be blunt: if the COLA is not restored, I will have no choice but to leave this field. I cannot continue to work 55+ hours a week while sacrificing time with my children, all while barely being able to afford the basics—like food, housing, and utilities. The reality is, even with overtime, I will not be able to pay my bills and put food on the table for my children. The rising cost of living is making it harder and harder for me—and for many of my colleagues—just to survive on our current wages.

This isn't just about me; it's about the future of the individuals we support. If wages don't increase, we will lose good, qualified staff, and the people who need us most will suffer. Allow me to share a story that perfectly illustrates the importance of the work we do. Over the past year, I have supported an individual who has lived in a group home for over 6 years. During this time, the staff had always offered personal care, such as cutting toenails and assisting with hygiene, but this individual had never been comfortable asking for this help.

Since I started working with her in October 2023, just two weeks ago, she came into my office with her own toenail clippers and asked me to cut her toenails. She also asked for personal hygiene products and for her PRN medication. This was a significant breakthrough—she had never done this with staff before. Her mother came to thank me personally, expressing how pleased she was with the progress her daughter had made. This is the kind of life-changing progress that we help individuals achieve when they feel valued and supported. But we can only continue to provide this level of care if we have the resources to do so.

Please, restore COLAs for all MaineCare services in the biennial budget. Without this restoration, we are not just facing a potential loss of staff—we are risking the future of the people we care for. The people we support are depending on us, and we need to be able to support them in return.

This isn't just a request for better pay—it's a plea for sustainability. It's a plea for the continued success and well-being of the people we serve, and for the survival of the direct support workforce that plays a critical role in their lives.

I thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. Please, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need further clarification.

Allisha Prindall
aprindall@skillsinc.net

461 Hartland Road
St. Albans, ME 04971

 207.938.4615

 www.skillsinc.net