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Testimony in support:

LD 327, "An Act to Provide Additional Funding to Support In-home Personal Support Services
for Qualified Senior Citizens"

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

March 12th, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Laura Harper. I am a Senior Associate for Moose Ridge Associates. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The Ombudsman Program provides statewide advocacy for residents of nursing homes, assisted housing including residential care and assisted living and for recipients of home care and adult day services. Additionally, the program serves patients waiting for discharge from the hospital who encounter barriers in accessing the long-term services and supports they need.

This legislation provides ongoing funding for in-home personal support services provided to adults with disabilities under rule Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter II, Section 19, Home and Community Benefits for the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities. We support funding for this critically needed home care program that allows thousands of Mainers to remain at home.

As of December 2024, OADS reported that Section 19 has 3,005 participants. To qualify for Section 19 Home and Community Benefits Waiver (HCB), you must meet the eligibility criteria for nursing home level of care. Section 19 HCB gives those with the highest level of need that otherwise would be institutionalized in a facility, the ability to remain at home. Access to nursing home level of care at home has never been more critical, considering the increase in nursing home closures. Since 2021, there have been 16 nursing home closures, making it incredibly difficult for Mainers to find a nursing home opening in their own community.

Additionally, Section 19 HCB allows those living in institutions the opportunity to transition back into the community. Known nationally as Money Follows the Person, Maine's Homeward Bound program helps seniors and adults with disabilities transition from nursing homes and hospitals

back to community-based care settings. Homeward Bound participants will receive support in accessing home and community-based services as well as services including specialized clinical assessments, independent living assistance, household start-up, enhanced care coordination, technology services and more. Almost all participants transition into the community by accessing the Section 19 HCB waiver.

If Maine wants to support older adults and adults with disabilities to remain at home, Section 19 HCB funding should be the top priority.

Thank you for your time and consideration.