



The Maine Long-Term Care
OMBUDSMAN
Program

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Testimony in Support

LD 709: An Act to Establish the Respite for ME Program

Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program before the Joint Standing Committee
on Health and Human Services

March 14, 2025

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

The Ombudsman Program provides statewide advocacy for older and disabled adults in nursing homes, assisted living, residential care 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 bill repeals the law that directs the Department of Health and Human Services to administer the Respite Care Fund and instead establishes the Respite for Me Program and directs the department to administer the Program for the purpose of providing respite care and supplement services for family caregivers and older relative caregivers.

Family caregiver support is an essential component of the long-term services system. It has become increasingly important particularly in response to the direct care workforce shortage. Respite for ME provides critically needed support for caregivers providing funds for respite care, counseling and training, legal and financial assistance and assistive technology. Additionally, family caregivers can access services to maintain their health through this program.

Respite for ME has included the implementation of TCARE, an evidence-based caregiver assessment tool that identifies the stressors of individual caregivers and provides personalized tools and resources to support caregivers. This assessment can help reduce the risk of caregiver burnout and the need for admission to a long-term care facility.

Washington state has utilized TCARE as a critical component of their family caregiver support program resulting in a significant reduction in the need for nursing home admission and reduced Medicaid costs. Utilization of TCARE for family caregivers in Maine has the potential to provide significant benefits. We are pleased that it is available through Respite for Me and hope that its use can be expanded.

Maine family caregivers need our support. Respite for ME is an important program that must be continued.

Thank you for your consideration.