

Testimony on LD 182: MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Maine Veterans' Homes

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Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the committee: Good afternoon, my name is Julie Calingo Schwetz, and I've proudly called Maine home since 2017. As a U.S. Army veteran with nearly 13 years of service, including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and affiliated with Maine Veterans' Homes since 2019, currently serving as secretary of the Board of Trustees, I stand before you with a deep commitment to our Veterans. I urge you to support LD 182.

Maine Veterans' Homes are essential care centers for those who have bravely served our country. However, the current MaineCare reimbursement rates fail to reflect the true cost of care, leaving these homes struggling to meet financial demands. LD 182 is crucial—it provides the necessary resources to ensure quality care, support for staff, and continued access to services for Veterans across Maine.

The current reimbursement model doesn't account for the unique needs of our Veterans and system, especially those with complex medical conditions. LD 182 would address this by setting per-resident reimbursement rates that reflect actual care costs, ensuring Maine Veterans' Homes can operate sustainably.

This bill is not just about funding; it's about safeguarding the dignity and quality of care our Veterans deserve. Without it, these homes risk failing to meet their financial obligations, potentially leading to closures. That would be devastating for the communities and Veterans who depend on these services.

Additionally, stable funding will help MVH attract and retain skilled staff, improve training, and elevate care quality, especially in rural areas where access is limited. Maine Veterans' Homes also contribute to the local economy in each MVH location across the state, supporting hundreds of jobs and strengthening community health.

MVH facilities have consistently delivered excellent care, as shown by the recent 2025 Customer Experience Award. LD 182 will ensure this continued success by fostering collaboration and accountability between DHHS and MVH.

Now is the time for action. Passing LD 182 will guarantee the future of Maine Veterans' Homes, honoring the sacrifices of our Veterans and preserving the care they have earned.

Thank you for your time and commitment to our Veterans.