

Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Courtney Freman, I am the Regional Vice President of Northbridge Companies who owns and operates eight (8) Assisted Living/PMNI Communities in the State of Maine. In this moment, we are providing services to over 636 Maine Residents. I am here to voice my strong opposition to Bill LD 979, specifically in regard to the alterations to the increased staffing levels, without a plan to match reimbursement needed to offset the inordinate cost the facilities would be facing.

As you know, our state's senior population is growing at an unprecedented rate, and with it, the demand for assisted living services continues to increase. We are at a crossroads where we – YOU – have a choice: to either collaborate with the facilities that care for our seniors and continue to provide quality care, or impose rules that will make it harder for these services to continue. Unfortunately, the proposed regulations will do the latter.

For Northbridge Companies PNMI's alone, which would be Avita of Brunswick, Avita of Stroudwater, Avita of Wells and newly acquired Landing at Saco Bay – with the new proposed staffing regulations, we would be looking at over

\$750,000/annual increase. To offset this expense, our rental rate would need to be increased over \$2k/per month per Resident. That would be a new starting rate now at \$12k/month for a Memory Care Companion. I have to make note that all three (3) of Avita's have been deficiency-free for over four (4) years on their Survey. I comment on this, because I believe we provide quality care, as do many other Assisted Livings/PNMI facilities in the State and I do not believe that increasing staffing ratios is the answer to do better at Communities across the State.

And while I understand the desire to improve care standards thru stricter regulations to appease others, the reality is that requiring higher staffing levels without providing the necessary funding to support those changes will only lead to more closures of assisted livings facilities. Many of these facilities are already operating on thin margins, and without adequate reimbursement, they simply will not be able to continue to operate:

The consequences of these closures will be devastating. If we force these facilities to close, where will our seniors go? Many will end up in hospitals, long-term care facilities, or even face homelessness. These closures will not

improve the quality of care; they will only reduce access to services when we need them most.

Additionally, this will place an unbearable burden on family caregivers and will further strain out healthcare system, which is already dealing with its own set of challenges. Forcing facilities to close will create a crisis of care.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed bill in light of its potential impact, which I just spoke of one of many today. If this bill moves forward we will see a wave of closures and our seniors will be left without the services they desperately need.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I ask that you please keep the needs of our seniors and the facilities that care for them at the forefront of your decision making. Let's work together to find solutions that balance all of our goals, which at the end of the day is to provide the best quality of care to our Maine Seniors.

They deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

Courtney Freeman