

April 23,2025

Representative Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to present testimony in support of representative Machias' bill: L.P. 1613, (H.P. 1067).

I am the primary caregiver for my wife Darel (83), who has advanced dementia. We first met when we were both undergraduates, and she is still the love of my life all these last 65 years. There is no way I could have completed my education and career without her love and compassion, and her expertise in business and management. Thanks to Darel our family has had a wonderful and exciting life together.

I first noticed her memory problems back in 2017, and at the time they were very minor. As her disease progressed, she was no longer able to drive and handle the activities of daily living, and then she began to get lost and wander. It soon became evident that I could not continue to work and provide the care that Darel would require. So, I retired and moved to Maine full-time to be near my family. I then enrolled Darel in the Bath-Brunswick Respite Care program, (a non-profit, mostly volunteer agency) 4 days/week and it was excellent! Nonetheless, her dementia continued to worsen, and it became apparent that she needed more care. We started with in-home personal care for up to 6hr/day (~ \$250/day) and then as her dementia progressed, it became evident that, for her safety and mine, we needed to find a live-in memory facility providing 24/7 care where I could visit her every day. This facility charges

almost \$15,000 a month, and her costs of care are measured and charged by the minute!

Despite these incredible costs, staff shortages and their limited experience with dementia patients are a daily problem. I have been there to see and smell my wife, and to note that things often are not going well for her and the other residents. I think that this must be due to the shortage of qualified people working in the facility. When staff salaries are about the same as Target or Home Depot why would anyone want to stay in a position that offers so little stability and advancement? With Maine having the oldest population in the country and facing the continued closing of dozens of nursing homes and hospitals, I am deeply concerned about the kind of medical and support care our senior citizens will receive. I respectfully note that every one of us in this room will face the costs and consequences of these terrible diseases unless something is done now. My \$15,000 monthly charges are assessed every six months as I noted above, and they are always increasing. We must help to take better care of our aging population. The Care Force program described in HP 1067 specifically addresses all the critical issues facing long-term and dementia care for Maine's older citizens and that is why I am here to endorse the passage of HP 1067.

Footnote: In closing, may I draw your attention to a report issued by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention? Completed in 2017, it is entitled "Maine Reaching For the Summit: Addressing Alzheimer's Disease And Related Dementias". The document might help you in addressing the current, long-term care problems Maine is now facing.

Word Count 523

