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*Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher presenting
LD 1634, An Act Regarding MaineCare Waiting Lists
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Laurie Osher. I represent House District 25, which is most of Orono. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 1634, An Act Regarding MaineCare Waiting Lists**.

This proposal seeks to address a problem that members of the committee will recognize: the amount of time that qualified individuals spend on waitlists before they are able to receive critically important services under MaineCare. It is a problem that both Democrats and Republicans have called attention to, and I am hopeful that we can work in a bipartisan way to advance LD 1634 as a solution.

LD 1634 places a statutory limit of six months on waiting times and requires that, at any point that waiting times extend longer than the limit of six months, the Department of Health and Human Services issue a report to this committee with a plan to reduce waiting times. The Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee must receive the plan from DHHS within three months from the time the Department becomes aware of the issue.

You will hear from families today who can speak firsthand to the impact of going without needed services as their loved ones languish on MaineCare waitlists. For many individuals, these services are necessary to meet daily living needs. Some are able to get by with alternative services for the time being but know that they or their family members could and should be better served. Others are without other coverage entirely. It causes unnecessary suffering for those on the waitlist and endless heartache for the people who love them.

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LD 1634 will not solve this problem overnight. It will still take hard work, including on our part as legislators. But it does create statutory accountability to ensure that we as a state are meeting these needs in a more consistent and timely manner. And it will give individuals and families hope that they will not continue to wait indefinitely for the support they so badly need.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to defer to those here today to share their personal experiences, but I will also do my best to answer any questions you may have for me.