

Kasey McBlais

Testimony in Support of LD 1566 An Act to Provide Compensation to Individuals with Lived Experience Serving on Advisory Boards, Commissions, Councils and Similar Groups

Date: 4/28/2025

To: The Committee On State And Local Government

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Kasey McBlais and I am a resident of Buckfield. I am here today to speak in favor of LD 1566, which would require compensation for individuals who share their lived experiences to inform public policy.

For too long, individuals with lived experience have been asked to show up—to share personal stories, provide feedback, sit on panels, and advise on policies—without fair compensation. Yet those perspectives are essential, offering real-world insights that professionals and systems often miss. This bill recognizes an important truth: lived experience is expertise, and expertise deserves to be compensated. It sets a clear standard—if you are asking for someone's time, knowledge, and vulnerability, you must also offer fair pay. This is about more than just fairness though; it's about sustainability. Many individuals are navigating difficult circumstances, and compensation enables them to continue participating. There are often many barriers for individuals to be able to show up. Finding childcare, taking time off of work, and transportation are just a few. It also sends a strong message: lived experience expertise is just as valuable as any formal credential.

I have poured my heart into serving on councils, advisory boards, and panels. I have written op-eds, spoken to the media, and partnered with organizations at the local, state, and national levels. I have shared my lived experience and expertise—again and again—often without any compensation.

I am a single mother of two children, one of whom lives with Autism and ADHD. I am also a working professional, fighting every day to build a better, more just world for my son, my family, and families like ours. Through lived experience, trainings, and countless workshops, I have become an expert in my son's beautiful, complex neurodiversity.

But let me be honest—sharing our story over and over again is not easy. It is painful. It is re-traumatizing. Because while my son is brilliant, hilarious, and full of light, he can also be impulsive, aggressive, and challenging. Reliving those truths is a heavy burden to carry.

And yet, when I am invited to a focus group, asked to sit on a panel, or called to serve on an advisory council, I say yes. I say yes because I believe our voices matter. I say yes because

change cannot happen without us. But the hard truth is—I can only keep saying yes if I can afford to.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 1566. Recognizing lived experience as true expertise demands more than acknowledgment—it requires action. Valuing our time, our insight, and our labor is essential to building systems that are equitable, inclusive, and effective. This bill offers a clear opportunity to lead with integrity and to ensure that those closest to the issues are rightfully compensated for their contributions. Dignity demands action. Equity demands compensation. Please vote yes on LD 1566.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kasey McBlais', written in a cursive style.

Kasey McBlais
Buckfield, ME
Oxford County