

Testimony of Wanda Pelkey  
CEO, First Atlantic HealthCare  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Friday, May 2, 2025 at 10:00 am

**In Support of:**  
**LD 1720, An Act Regarding Benefits and Training for Long-Term Care Workers**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Wanda Pelkey and I serve as the CEO of First Atlantic Healthcare. First Atlantic is a Maine-based company that owns and operates 14 nursing and residential care facilities. We care for about 1,200 residents in our owned locations throughout Maine. Today I'm providing written testimony in support of LD 1720.

First Atlantic employs about 1,500 people. Half of them are direct caregivers, most of the others are lower paid wage earners in housekeeping, laundry, and dietary roles. Most are women and many are raising children. All of them do noble, essential, and demanding work. Unfortunately, with the escalating costs of housing, food, and childcare many of them struggle to make ends meet. This often causes many to ultimately leave healthcare for other sectors that can afford better pay and benefits including restaurants, hotels, and retail. It's frustrating we can't afford something better for them given our MaineCare reimbursement rates are limited.

As originally drafted, this bill would provide some unique approaches for the State of Maine to help long-term care providers provide better benefits and lower the barrier to entry into our direct care worker jobs. Specifically, permitting long term caregivers to access the same group health and retirement benefit plans available to Maine State workers and educators. This greater group purchasing power would enable us to offer better coverage at less cost to these essential direct caregivers. We understand that an amendment will remove those sections of the bill.

The remaining key elements of LD 1720 would help us provide basic training for entry-level caregivers like CNAs and Personal Support Specialists (PSS). These provisions include helping facilities cover the cost of training programs and it would also require the State certification tests to be offered in multiple languages to help new Mainers when taking these standardized tests. These approaches would help us attract new workers and maintain this essential workforce.

Said simply, these programs would help us provide rewarding and enriching jobs that begins to set us apart from other employers. I hope you will support this bill and sincerely appreciate your time today.

Thank you,  
Wanda Pelkey