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*Testimony of Rep. Jennifer Poirier on
LD 1932, "An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and
Enhance Workforce Development"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

January 20, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed colleagues of the committee,

I'm Jennifer Poirier, and I represent House District 70 — Skowhegan.

I am very proud to stand before you as a co-sponsor of LD 1932 and am here to testify in support of the bill. The subject of this bill is extremely important to me and so many other people throughout our state. It supports efforts that reinforce our commitment to supporting Maine's most vulnerable residents. This is not only about workforce development and retention — it's an essential piece of legislation that will ensure individuals have the specialized support and care they need to live their best lives. This bill will help secure the direct care workforce we need to stabilize services now. It will help maintain and build vital daily services so that individuals can continue to live with dignity, independence, and opportunity.

Most of you are already aware of my professional career as a Community Living Coordinator at Living Innovations — and as someone who began her career as a direct support professional. I work with Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) every day. I see DSPs help individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism reach their goals, advocate for themselves, and live with greater independence. Their compassion, creativity, and dedication are unmatched.

We work with individuals with a wide array of goals. DSPs that I work with have assisted individuals to put their own jackets on, to cook healthy meals, to budget their spending money, study for their driver's license, and even to make friends and build healthy relationships. No goal is small. Everyone has their own unique needs and desires. Our DSPs create daily living experiences to assist each person to work toward learning new skills and attaining their goals. I am very fortunate to have a team of dedicated and compassionate DSPs. We need more hard workers like them to be able to assist more individuals.

Agencies across Maine are struggling. Recruiting and retaining staff has become increasingly difficult. Many agencies have employment vacancies that have been open for countless months, even with the strongest recruitment efforts. Many organizations are barely meeting payroll, and without adequate funding, workers who want to stay in this field are forced to leave for higher-paying jobs elsewhere. That instability directly affects the people we serve.

LD 1932 addresses these challenges head-on. It increases the labor portion of reimbursement rates from 125% of minimum wage to 140% and ensures essential support workers are paid no less than 125% of minimum wage once those increases take effect. These changes will help stabilize a workforce that has been stretched far too thin for far too long.

The bill also strengthens our ability to plan responsibly for the future. It requires the state to measure the care gap — the difference between the services individuals are approved for and the hours actually delivered — so we can finally understand the true level of unmet need. It expands the Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee, and importantly, **requires long-term cost forecasting**, as well as new planning efforts around technology, training, and workforce advancement.

These are practical, forward-looking steps that will help ensure Maine can meet the needs of its residents — not just today, but in the years ahead.

Too many people are waiting for staffing to assist them with their daily lives and independence. The need for these services is not going away. Our essential workers must be a priority, and LD 1932 moves us in the right direction. It honors the work being done every day and strengthens the system that so many individuals and families depend on.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Jennifer Poirier
State Representative