

TESTIMONY

IN SUPPORT

LD 1932: An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce
Development

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

January 20, 2026

32 Years in Caregiving — But Still Fighting to Make Ends Meet

Stephanie Hatcher - Hope Family Partners in Lewiston.

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1932: *An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development*.

I've spent over 32 years working as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) and trainer here in my home state of Maine. I currently work at Hope Family Partners in Lewiston, providing residential supports to adults with developmental disabilities and autism. I started this work in 1993, inspired by my mother, who worked in direct care since I was a toddler. From the time I was seven, I knew I wanted to help people with disabilities live full, meaningful lives. That passion has never faded.

Today, I serve as a trainer for new and seasoned DSPs — people who dedicate themselves to one of the most essential, demanding, and deeply rewarding roles in our state. But every day, I see those same workers struggle to survive on wages that don't reflect the dedication, skill, or compassion this work requires.

Many of my colleagues are forced to work two or even three jobs just to cover basic expenses like rent, heating oil and groceries. Recruitment and retention is a constant struggle. The people who suffer most are the individuals we support — people with disabilities, Mainers just like you and I, who rely on a stable, caring workforce to meet their needs every day, 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

That's why I'm urging our Maine leaders to support LD 1932: *An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development*. This is not just about a competitive wage; it's about a livable wage. It's about building a system that actually works for the people who need it most. Direct care work is essential work. Let's start treating it that way.