

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

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Lexi Johnson and I am the Team Director of a Community Supports Program and a Direct Support Professional at Gallant Therapy Services serving individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

I am happy to be here today in support of this legislation that would increase wages for Essential Support Workers.

I began working as a DSP because I wanted to find a way I could support my community and put time and energy towards making a difference day to day. People choose to do this work because they believe in creating an accessible world for all. To make people's lives better, more comfortable, and to encourage these individuals we serve to accomplish their goals and dreams.

Due to the pay, Essential Support Workers may be forced to choose working a second job even as a full time employee, or may need to find another job. I myself have contemplated a second job as I have medical bills that need to be paid and a family to support. There are many more like me who are struggling to pay bills, need to support their family, experience sickness, financial hardship, and more. We use our personal vehicles to support clients with little reimbursement for gas and no reimbursement for repairs. We give our emotional energy to our consumers as they navigate the many different experiences of life, all while navigating our own at home. Our well-being cannot be supported if we are worried about whether we can pay rent next month, or are working two jobs and are unable to "recharge" after giving our energy to others. A care worker who feels supported well will make our consumers feel that they are supported well.

We work these jobs for our love and belief in people and because of our motivation to make a difference. When considering the passing of this bill, remember that it will secure the "essential" care of many who need it here in the State of Maine and will show our care workers that you would like to make their lives better, more comfortable, help them achieve their goals and dreams, and affirm that their role is "essential" as they make a difference in the community you serve.

Thank you for your consideration.