



61 Winthrop Street • Augusta, ME 04330
1-800-499-0229 • Fax 207-621-0509
MLTCOP@MaineOmbudsman.org

IN SUPPORT

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

January 20, 2026

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Nicole Marchesi. I am the Public Policy Advocate for the Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. I also serve as a member of the Essential Care and Support Workforce Partnership steering committee.

The Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program provides advocacy services for older and disabled adults in nursing homes, assisted housing programs, adult day programs and for recipients of home care services. Additionally, we serve patients in hospitals who are ready for discharge and cannot access the long-term services and support they need.

I am very pleased to testify in support of this important legislation that provides an opportunity to build a strong and sustainable essential care workforce that is so critically needed in our state. An investment in better wages for these professionals must be made to recruit and retain staff who in every way are the backbone of the long-term services and supports system. For far too long, direct care and support staff have had to struggle with low wages and no hope of getting ahead. In our extensive work with direct care and support staff across the state, we hear repeatedly about the discouragement and stress caused by low wages and often, having to work two jobs to make ends meet.

The direct care and support workforce shortage impacts both access and quality of care for older and disabled adults across the state who need care either in a long-term care

facility or in the community. Additionally, it impacts family caregivers who need support to keep a loved one at home. When staffing levels are inadequate in a nursing home or assisted housing program, residents suffer when they do not receive the care they need. Staffing complaints are one of the most frequent received by our program. Additionally, thousands of hours of home care go undelivered each week due to staffing shortages placing older and disabled adults who need care at risk of hospitalization or care at a higher cost in a long-term care facility.

We are very grateful to Speaker Fecteau for sponsoring this comprehensive legislation that addresses wages, training, technology, and data collection for long-term planning. We are appreciative that the legislation proposes adding the Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program to the Essential Workforce Advisory Committee. We believe we can bring important perspectives to this committee from our advocacy with care recipients and their families as well as from direct care and support staff who are members of the Direct Care and Support Advisory Council.

Thank you for your consideration.