

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 Claire Kanuma, I am a Direct Support Professional/ Residential Care Coordinator serving individuals with disability to live purposeful, to support their independence with dignity, respect and inclusion.

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

I have been a Direct Care/Direct Support Professional DSP since 2016 here in Maine.

I worked with different Individuals with disabilities requiring different needs; some need personal care(transfers from bed to wheelchair, from wheelchair to toilet, shower , clothing, wiping, grooming, feeding, household chores, medical appointments, etc), some are nonverbal and others experience behaviors. These individuals need compassionate, reliable, patient, empathy, advocator care givers.

I support them with heart felt and they become as members of my family. A Direct Care worker is not only a care giver but also a Direct Care worker is at the same time a care giver, an unknown counselor, a family member and friend of the individual we serve.

Despite all these needs of quality services from Direct Care workers, the wage is not enough to keep one job. I and most of Direct Care workers must do two jobs to be able to survive.

I do love my job because I feel I am contributing in meaningful life of someone/ individuals I support in particular and community in general. That why I prefer to stay in this field and do two jobs to be able to compete my monthly needs.

I did not go in detail if not providing Direct Care is more than Job.

Thank you for your consideration.