

Testimony of Lolice Brann, resident of Hartland

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 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*.

My name is Lolice Brann. I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP), and I work for SKILLS, Inc. providing support to adults with intellectual disabilities. In December I was recognized as a MACSP DSP of the Year. I work in 3 different programs. I provide coverage at one of our center-based community support programs. In that program, I support three individuals in a small group. Each of these individuals has something they want to complete in the time they are there; this could look like one wanting to go volunteer and another wanting to stay and work on nutrition skills. My role is juggling these wants to make sure that each person is able to do what it is that they would like to do while also supporting them emotionally. A large part of my role is spent providing home support. In this role, I work with one individual at a time while supporting them with cleaning, cooking, and going to the doctors as well as supporting them with their medical health. I help them to advocate for their own health and when health care providers dismiss the person I am supporting, I become a strong advocate to make sure that their voice has been heard. I am constantly juggling my schedule to make sure the needs of each individual and their varying schedules are met each day. I also provide community inclusion, known as one-on-one community support. For this program, I have to learn what each person likes and dislikes, I then map out their community with them, and find ways that the person I am supporting can become a member in their community. This may be a volunteering position at a non-profit company, going to the gym to work on their physical health, or going to a local bowling alley to meet friends. The important part is consistency to be sure that they are able to build meaningful relationships with people in their community.

I have been a DSP for 14 years. In that time, I've held a variety of positions; per diem fill-in, residential support in a group home, a Team Leader, day program services, home supports, and community inclusion. I also am the head coach for our Special Olympics team. In all that they do, I live by the mantra "if you don't use it, you lose it." Each week I teach people with disabilities how to cook, clean, make sure they receive their proper medication and support them when they want to do their own medication to be more independent. I support them while traveling to many doctors appointments. I assist them to go to their local community so they can become part of their community. I help with budgeting, I provide emotional support, and I teach the importance of exercise. I support relationships while encouraging new friendships and

supporting the growth while also teaching that not all people in the community are good people. Above all, I support them but allow them to learn for themselves.

My mom and my sister both have intellectual disabilities so my calling to this work runs very deep. Both my mom and my sister are high functioning. Watching them struggle while no one ever took them seriously frustrated me as I grew and got older. When I was in high school I took a class called Jobs for Maine graduates. During this class the opportunity opened up for me to volunteer helping a local company. At the time it was Sebasticook Farms which is now SKILLS, Inc. I volunteered to go bowling for the Special Olympics. During this time, I met some amazing human beings and the staff that supported them. From there I knew I wanted to work supporting these individuals. The town that I grew up in also had some individuals that had disabilities. They would be seen walking around or riding their bikes. I remember one that would pull a wagon around with bottles to take to the bottle redemption in town, another who rode their bike all over town, and another who loved to joke with me. All of these encounters encouraged me to apply when I was old enough. The first time I applied, I was not accepted for a position. I waited and worked other jobs and built some work experience and reapplied because I knew this is where I wanted to work. What has kept me here for 14 years are the people I support. Although I work full-time at SKILLS, I also work part-time at Walmart in Palmyra. I also have a baking business where I make specialty cakes and baked goods for order.

The lack of wages commensurate with what my job entails, coupled with a lack of a wage increase, makes it so that I have to work more than 1 full-time job. I have to spend extra time at a second and third job and not at home with my family. An increase in wage would help me to be able to quit my other job, or at least not have to work so many extra hours each week.

My concern for the people that I support is that if we don't have a wage increase we will continue to have staffing shortages causing burn out and high turn over rates that interrupts the support and care that individuals with disabilities receive each day. This may stop them from getting to their doctors for important appointments. If they do get to go, it may be with a staff member that doesn't know them as well and therefore is not able to advocate for them while there, stopping them from getting the help that they may need. I have done research. Maine is 50th in Direct Support Pay. We have one of the highest turn over rates due to the low pay.

I ask that you support LD 1932. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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