

Testimony of Donald O. Lagace Jr.

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

In Support of LD 1932

An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development

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 Don Lagace Jr., and I am the guardian and brother of Roxanne Lagace, a 68-year-old woman with developmental disabilities who receives vital support services here in Augusta. In addition, I am a member of the Board of Directors for 3-Rivers Inc, which is a statewide service provider formed from a recent merger of three very successful organizations: GMS, Uplift, and IAMs. I am continuing my parents' legacy and commitment to my sister as her guardian and working with 3-Rivers Inc. to support disabled individuals within our community so they can lead happy and healthy lives.

I come before you today as a brother, guardian, and board member to urge your support for LD 1932 to create competitive, sustainable wages for direct care and support workers across Maine. These workers truly represent the backbone of Maine's care system, and they are committed to Roxanne and thousands of Mainers like her with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The daily roles and responsibilities of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are crucial to ensuring the healthy and successful lives of people with these disabilities. I have witnessed many instances where DSPs, who are on the front lines of care, are forced to leave their low-wage positions that they love for jobs that can better support them financially. This turnover is devastating for the individuals they serve, their families, and providers resulting in widespread uncertainty and instability.

I have personally experienced the negative impacts of DSP turnover and the resulting stress it places on my sister and others in their homes and communities. Low state reimbursement rates have resulted in low wages and frequent staff changes, which are very emotional and unsettling for both residents, families, and other DSPs who often feel obligated and pressured to cover shifts due to workforce vacancies.

Roxanne has been crushed numerous times in recent years as DSPs quit their jobs. This instability disrupts schedules and makes it difficult to achieve normalization and a good quality of life.

Direct Support Professionals represent those on our front lines who strive to provide love, care, residential integration, and employment services to all with disabilities.

Your support for increasing the labor component of MaineCare direct service rates to 140% of minimum wage through LD 1932 would help to stabilize this workforce and ensure the delivery of **quality care** is provided to some of the most vulnerable within our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity and for your support to my sister Roxanne and all those in need.