



Testimony of Darryl Wood, Executive Director, LEAP, Inc.

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 Darryl Wood. I am the Executive Director of LEAP in Farmington Maine. I first want to thank Speaker Fecteau and the other bill sponsors. This bill potentially impacts tens of thousands of Mainers employed in a very necessary field of work.

LEAP has been around since 1980. We operate in Western Maine with Farmington as the center of operations. We provide residential and case management support to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I think it is expected that I will be here in my director's role, pleading for more money. And here I am. This is the third year in a row LEAP will lose money, in fact we budgeted to lose money. This is because we expense all we can in pay and benefits. I am committed to do the best we can, with what we have and never sacrifice quality.

That being said, I am really here for the families that want and deserve quality staff they can count on over time.

And for the frontline caregivers who sacrifice more than most of you will ever know, while being unable to make ends meet. Eventually, this becomes a mental health crisis for the caregiver. No one is immune to constant financial stress even while doing a job they are committed to.

One last comment, one I always make. There is no better investment of taxpayer dollars than into our DSPs in wages and benefits. DSP's spend locally on necessities that lift up the small businesses in our communities. They stay off Medicaid and hospitals and doctors get paid via private insurance. All that reimbursement makes lives better and circulates right back into the Maine economy while generating tax revenue.