

Oral Testimony
January 20, 2026

In support of LD 1932, An Act to Support Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is June Harnden and I live in Bridgton. I am a direct support professional, one of two team leads and a CRMA in a day treatment program in Standish.

I have been a DSP for the last 10 years. I was called to this type of work because I have a passion for supporting others. When my two boys were young, I had an in-home daycare. As they grew older, I worked at my local elementary school in the day treatment and behavior programs. From there, I transitioned to a company serving the children's behavioral health to work with the teenage population. After leaving, I came to brain injury services for adults. I have witnessed people of all ages gain their independence with a variety of skills. Whether they are learning how to ask for a turn with their friends, or brush their teeth, these moments are incredible to witness.

In my current position, I have administrative duties, but I also assist with the loading and unloading of vans as people in our care may have impaired safety skills or mobility challenges, support participants with transitioning into the building and help with self-care tasks like toileting.

Like many of you here today, I have had many loved ones stay in hospitals or nursing homes for extended periods. Some of the care they received was great, some not so much. If you know me, you know that I love to get to know people, so at many of these facilities, I talked with the staff. There is one common denominator that ties in to the care at these facilities. There is a lack of money in this line of work. I have heard, and witnessed, so many amazing people and staff leave positions that they love in direct care to pursue more money. This puts a great strain on the caregivers that remain, directly impacting the quality of care they are able to give.

I love what I do. I feel as though I was put here to help people. Unfortunately, I don't know how much longer I can stay in a field that doesn't allow me to pay bills, buy groceries, and continue to care for my own household. With the rising cost of health insurance, groceries, and other essentials, things are looking gray. A wage increase would greatly impact my ability to pay for the expenses that I mentioned.

I am worried for all of the people and families that I support. Without a direct support workforce available, participants would not receive the consistent quality service they deserve, they would not be able to gain and maintain independence with many skills that we take for granted, and the future would be dark. There would be more pressure on families and friends to provide care without proper training and guidance, effecting more lives than we can imagine.

I ask you all to think about those that you love. If this doesn't already touch your life in some way, how would that change if one of your loved ones was involved in some kind of accident, left with a brain injury? You would want and expect nothing less than the best care and support for that person. Without more monetary support for this field, that care would become harder and harder to find. I am here today to ask you to support LD 1932. Thank you all for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

June Harnden, DSP, CRMA