



*LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire is an association representing mission-driven senior living and long-term care providers in Maine and New Hampshire. Our member organizations include nursing homes, assisted living programs, federally-assisted and market-rate housing, and Life Plan Communities (continuing care retirement communities).  
Our Mission: Inspiring our members to pursue innovation and the best life for older adults.  
Our Vision: LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire is a recognized, transformational leader in shaping society's vision of aging.*

January 20, 2026

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

I am Denise Vachon, here representing provider members of LeadingAge ME NH in the area of Government Affairs and Member Services. LeadingAge ME NH supports LD 1932 and the many dedicated and talented people at every level of care and service that bring essential supports to those most vulnerable in our communities and state.

For four decades, I led a not-for-profit organization providing housing and supports to older adults and people living with disabilities across the income spectrum and at varying levels of care. That experience allows me to attest as to how **essential** our essential workers truly are. Now, in my current chapter, and as the daughter of 91 year-old parents living in their own home who benefit from community supports that complement what we can do as family, I can attest from a different perspective -- to the quality of life that "our direct care worker" adds to my parents' lives as they continue to do all they can to remain safely in the place they have called home for the past 60 years.

LD 1932 recognizes Direct Care Workers' value as the **bedrock** of our system of long term services and supports, and the health care system as a whole. The stories of facilities and agencies closing due to staffing shortages are well and widely known. When Direct Care and other essential workers are not properly compensated with salary and benefits commensurate with the comparable work in other sectors, they leave. Or they don't apply to work in our field at all.

It is the responsibility of the State, and its **mission**, to assure that care and services are available to the most vulnerable among its citizens. It is the State's responsibility to engage and partner with expert, professional providers and programs who are committed to the highest quality of care and service. It is also its obligation to that partnership to properly compensate those partners. Honoring its obligation allows for and supports operating cultures and teams that bring well-trained, skilled, compassionate care to our mutual customer.

Direct Care Workers deserve – and have – our collective deep gratitude. They deserve to be valued commensurate with that gratitude by fair compensation, proper and timely training, and by being provided with technology to allow them to maximize their talent and efforts without compromising the consumer experience. LD 1932 recognizes the critical importance of investing in the foundation of our long term services and supports system by investing in our Direct Care talent and compensating them in ways that sustain them as citizens themselves, and that value the essential nature of their work.

LD 1932 may not be a singular silver bullet to solve all our staffing challenges. But it does call for the resources and reimbursement that are needed to take another solid step forward to take care of those who take care of those most vulnerable among us.

I urge your support of LD 1932

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