



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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January 28, 2026

Testimony of Rep. Poppy Arford regarding

LD 2117 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health, and Human Services to Amend Its Rule Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter II, Section 21, Home and Community Benefits for Members with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder

Before the Health and Human Services Committee

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Poppy Arford and I have the distinct privilege of representing House District 101, the western part of Brunswick.

As a cosponsor, I stand before you to ask that you vote in favor of this resolve directing the Department of Health and Human Services to amend the MaineCare Benefits Manual to provide greater stability and continuity of care for people with disabilities living in a two-person residential home.

I ask this as LD 2117 presents a commonsense solution to a small number of cases within two-person residential settings that deserve thoughtful, person-centered attention. When one resident of a two-person residential home vacates the residence, current policy requires a time-bound discharge process be initiated for the remaining member. This process includes an expectation that the remaining member, if the vacancy is not filled, must vacate the home. For an individual who has resided in a residential home, often for years with consistent and reliable supports, that degree of housing insecurity is deeply, profoundly destabilizing and can have significant negative consequences on their wellbeing and connection to community. As an active member in a district that includes the Independence Association and their Spindlenetworks community program, I have seen firsthand how valuable, and irreplaceable these connections are. In fact, a constituent who is a parent of a 45-year-old with complex medical, intellectual and mental health disabilities provides the following insight:

“I cannot stress enough how important stable housing has been for my son, who lives in a residential home. It has been foundational in providing him a safe space to fully participate in life as he is able. Stable housing has allowed him to develop trusted relationships where his Direct Support Professionals understand his needs. This has resulted in fewer medication errors,

has accommodated his dietary needs to maintain his health, has resulted in fewer hospitalizations and crises, and allowed greater independence because of the confidence he feels. Because of stable housing, my son is a valued volunteer at MidCoast Hunger Prevention. Meals on Wheels, our local library, and the hospital. None of these inclusive, community building opportunities happen without a strong housing foundation. I, and many of my fellow parents of children with disabilities, am aging and will not always be here to advocate on their behalf. He deserves to live safely and securely in his home as long as possible, without the threat of a move that will have serious repercussions. LD 2117 allows for a well thought out process to ensure the housing security people with disabilities deserve.”

I agree and understand how critically important it is that these individuals, their families, and the providers that support them have a housing system that is stable, predictable and capable of prioritizing continuity of care and housing in all circumstances.

I will end by again asking for your OTP vote. I am happy to take your questions yet understand that the providers and the people impacted by this legislation will be testifying next.

Thank you.