

**TESTIMONY OF Mary Jane McDade, Chief Executive Officer
North Country Associates:
Public Hearing: Wednesday, February 11th, 2026**

Testimony before the Committee on Health and Human Services

In support of:

LD 2131, Amended Title: Resolve, Directing DHHS to Amend Specific Portions of the Nursing Facility Principals of Reimbursement and to Timely Release Quality Payments

Chairs Meyer and Ingwersen as well as Distinguished Members of the Committee of Health and Human Services:

My name is Mary Jane McDade, I am the Chief Executive Officer for North Country Associates. North Country owns and manages 20 Long Term Care, Residential Care and ICF/IID facilities throughout Maine. I am here today to give testimony as to why I support LD 2131, a resolve to direct DHHS to amend specific portions of the Nursing Facility Principals of Reimbursement and to timely release the Quality Payments.

This bill is simply asking DHHS to make a few changes to better assist our facilities to provide quality care to the residents we serve. To do this they would need to do the following:

1. Address the language in the Maine Care Benefits Manual, Principles of Reimbursement for Nursing Homes, Chapter III, Section 67, Principle 22.6. that speaks to the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) being subject to guardrails. The language, as it is written, is not what legislation approved in 2025. COLAs should NOT be subject to any guardrails.
2. Amend language in the same Principles mentioned in number 1. by amending the language for a \$6.00 per day add-on to the Direct Care portion of the rate that is also not subject to the aforementioned guardrails.

3. Finally, the bill directs DHHS to release payments of the Value Based Purchasing bonus pool of \$8.1 million for the facilities that have met the criteria of the QuEST program.

I can't speak for all nursing homes in Maine, but I can speak for the 20 centers I represent. We have come so far post-pandemic. We have been able to reduce agency staff by 30% overall, and a few of our centers have practically eliminated use of agency staffing all together. If we are not able to give Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) or keep up with competitive wages, our facilities will be forced to increase our use of agency staffing, guaranteed.

With respect to section 3 of the bill, our facilities embraced the QuEST program as designed by DHHS and worked hard to meet the criteria in order to be eligible for a portion of the bonus pool of \$8.1 Million. We were so thankful to receive letters from DHHS in December 2025, stating all of our NCA facilities qualified and the letters went on further to say the amount of money each home would receive. These dollar amounts were used to develop our 2026 Operational Budgets. We are now in the second week of February and we still have not received this money nor have we been given a clear explanation as to why we haven't.

For these reasons, I urge you to support LD 2131 by supporting our staff so they can get COLAs and wage adjustments so we can further reduce our reliance on agency staffing and continue to provide quality care to the people we serve and for DHHS to follow through on the promise to give qualifying facilities their portion of the Value Based Purchasing bonus pool.

I want to thank the committee for listening to me today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.