



Testimony of Ann-Marie Mayberry

In opposition to LD 2177 An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

February 11, 2026

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Ann-Marie Mayberry. I am the CEO of 3Rivers, a statewide provider delivering essential MaineCare-funded services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all 16 counties of Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to LD 2077 An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System.

I am here today to express our strong opposition to this bill. While we fully support efforts to modernize MaineCare's payment system, this legislation, as written, removes the only reliable mechanism that allows providers like 3Rivers to keep pace with the real labor market: guaranteed annual cost-of-living adjustments.

Instead, COLAs become discretionary, dependent on whatever funds happen to be available in a given year. The Department would be permitted to reduce or eliminate them entirely. For a provider operating statewide across every labor market in Maine, that creates instability we simply cannot navigate. Our ability to maintain staffing, and therefore maintain access to services, depends on reimbursement rates that move with actual economic conditions, not year-to-year budget discretion.

Let me be very clear: Direct Support Professionals are not competing with Maine's minimum wage. In 2026, Maine's minimum wage went to \$15.10/hour, following a 3.1% CPI-W increase. But DSPs aren't leaving the field for minimum-wage jobs; they're leaving because the broader labor market pays significantly more.

Across Maine, fast-food employers routinely pay \$19 an hour or more, especially in high-volume or high-pressure locations. Statewide data show that fast-food workers now average \$21.30/hour, with the 75th percentile earning \$23.27/hour, and wages reaching as high as \$30/hour.

Within Maine, major chains such as McDonald's pay frontline positions between \$19 and \$23 per hour.

This is the wage landscape we are competing in today, in every single county.

But it is not only wages that are increasing elsewhere; turnover within our own sector is rising to crisis levels.

#### DSP Turnover Data (National & Sector Trends)

- National DSP turnover has hovered around 50% annually for several years, with some agencies reporting that one in eight DSP positions remain vacant at all times.
- According to the 2024 ANCOR workforce crisis report, 90% of providers nationwide experienced moderate or severe staffing shortages, and 69% had to turn away new referrals due to lack of staff.
- New national data show DSP turnover ranging from 21% to over 59% depending on the state, with an overall average turnover rate of 41%. Nearly 20% of DSP positions remain unfilled.

These are not abstract numbers; these are the conditions we are living in as a statewide provider.

High turnover hurts continuity, increases risk, and directly reduces access to services. Every time a DSP leaves, the individuals we support lose a trusted relationship. Families lose stability. Our remaining staff shoulder more overtime, more burnout, and more crisis work.

Now more than ever, predictable COLAs are essential to stopping these losses.

To illustrate the impact for a provider like 3Rivers: We employ about 300 DSPs, with an average wage of \$18.75/hour. A 3% COLA—just enough to keep pace with market movement—would cost us roughly \$351,000 per year. That is a predictable, budgetable cost when COLAs are guaranteed.

But when COLAs can be delayed or eliminated, that same cost becomes an unfunded mandate, and we fall even further behind the market.

3Rivers is deeply committed to supporting individuals across every part of Maine—from the rural northern and eastern counties to the more urban areas in the south—but we simply cannot maintain reliable services if reimbursement continues to lag behind the actual labor market conditions pulling staff out of this field.

We urge the Committee to amend this bill to restore required annual COLAs, or adopt a wage-index model that acknowledges the true labor environment DSPs operate in. Without this, Maine's system will continue to lose DSPs at unsustainable rates, and the people we serve (the reason we all do this work) will feel the consequences first.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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