

Testimony for LD 2177

An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System

February 11, 2026

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of NeuroRestorative Maine in opposition to LD 2177, An Act to Update and Improve the MaineCare Reimbursement System.

Since 2009, NeuroRestorative Maine has been a proud provider of neurorehabilitation services and currently participates in multiple waiver programs, including MaineCare's waiver for adults with brain injury, two waivers for people with autism and/or intellectual disabilities, and a waiver for other related conditions. Currently we employ 329 Mainers and serve 303 adults with various disabilities and complex medical conditions in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec and York counties.

I appreciate the work that has been done these past years to address Maine's dwindling workforce and to provide predictability in Maine's system of care. While I do not oppose the general technical changes to LD 2177, the language in section 3, subsection 4 serves to destabilize the good work this legislature, the Department and stakeholders had previously implemented, by making the schedule of rate adjustments and COLAs "subject to available appropriations," which could include elimination of adjustments altogether.

As a person who experienced these last years the heavy challenge of facing families as we told them we would have to close group homes and move loved ones involuntarily because the lack of direct care workers made remaining open impossible, and as a person who has had to spend days working out of a group home during the height of the pandemic as an extra pair of hands for a transfer assistance because there simply were not enough people available to ensure safe staffing ratios, I can say from experience that this bill concerns me.

I have been witness to workers experiencing challenges with rising housing costs, workers who have been in positions to live out of their cars or couch surf as a method of survival. These have been people who work full-time. As a provider, I, along with many long-standing organizations, are committed to preventing that and have a consistent track record of increasing direct care wages annually. This bill jeopardizes that commitment. As written, LD 2177 is detrimental to our workforce and bad for our vulnerable system of care.

I ask you to oppose LD 2177, or at the very least amend the language on page 7 that provides for COLAs only when there are available funds and that would allow for the elimination of scheduled adjustments. I ask you to make Maine's essential workforce a priority by ensuring that COLAs are consistent and predictable, not consideration only when it's convenient. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

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