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The Power of Community

In RE: LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Joint Standing Committees on Appropriation and Financial Affairs & Health and Human Services

February 17, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Rotondo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 2212.

I'm Jennifer Putnam, CEO of Waypoint Maine. Waypoint is located in southern and western Maine and provides a wide range of services for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism, including a Pre-k - Grade 5 special purpose private school, case management and care coordination for seven hundred children and adults, and day programs and residential services for adults. With over 350 employees, we've supported thousands of adults, children and families for sixty years.

It's impossible for me, impossible for our organization, to continue to care for children and adults adequately without adequate funding. Every single service we provide relies on direct care, direct support and direct services in our school.

Every day, I ask my staff to do really hard work: work on nights, on weekends, outdoors in the cold, work that helps kids develop crucial skills, work that gets someone out in their community, work that gets someone to their doctor, work that is meaningful, and challenging and absolutely critical for people with disabilities and autism.

We have countless legal and regulatory compliance requirements we are obliged to follow and for good reason. Licensing standards, health and safety mandates, fire codes, background checks, training mandates, the list is extensive. We have an obligation to pay a decent wage, offer health insurance, pay into paid leave programs. And we meet these obligations, and often exceed them, because it's the right thing to do. For our staff, for our clients and for our community.

We also have a social and moral contract with all of you, as fellow Mainers, and as providers who agree to support people who cannot care for themselves. We believe, too, that you have a moral and social contract with us: To provide us with the rates necessary to meet our obligation to the people we support. As you all know, we can't raise our prices when our costs go up. When minimum wage is increased, we have to rely on the administration and now, on you, to

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allocate and fund cost of living adjustments and reimbursement rates that are essential for us to continue doing this work. We can't have inadequate reimbursement rates and continue to provide the kind of high-quality services our staff makes possible every single day. But that quality doesn't happen without skilled, compassionate, committed people—who show up despite the long hours, the emotional weight, and the physical demands of this work. They deserve the resources, the staffing, and the stability that adequate funding provides. Without it, we simply cannot continue to deliver the level of care and support our students and adults deserve.

Please provide funding to restore COLAs for essential care and support services in the supplemental budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Putnam, CEO
Waypoint Maine