



Maine Health Care Association

**TESTIMONY OF Nadine L. Grosso  
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Maine Health Care Association**

February 11, 2021

To the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services

**In Support of L.D. 74**

***Resolve, To Ensure Appropriate Personal Needs Allowances  
for Persons Residing in Long-term Care Facilities***

Good afternoon, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee. My name is Nadine Grosso and I am the Vice President and Director of Communications of the Maine Health Care Association. Our organization represents the majority of the state's nursing homes and 135 assisted living facilities. I am pleased to testify in support of LD 74 today.

Under the MaineCare Eligibility Manual rules, the State says that a resident of a nursing facility or a residential care facility who receives MaineCare may retain a monthly personal needs allowance (PNA) from their personal income. Any income above the PNA is applied toward the cost of care, which is the amount the State expects the resident to contribute to their care in the facility.

Nursing home and residential care residents depend on their PNA to provide many personal care items and services that we tend to take for granted. Some examples include hair care, phone service, glasses, over the counter medications, snacks, outings, newspaper subscriptions, clothing and gifts for family and friends. Currently, the PNA for a resident in a nursing facility is \$40 per month and for a resident in a PNMI, \$70 per month. These amounts were last increased in 1985 – 36 years ago.

To give you some background on this issue, previous attempts to increase the PNA have failed for a couple of reasons. The first is a lack of a consumer protest about the issue because in most cases, the need is met, one way or another. Our membership surveys have shown over the years that about 50% of residents meet or exceed the allowance each month but their needs do not go unmet. This is true, especially during the pandemic, as family and friends have been mostly unable to bring items to residents. For a time at the beginning of COVID-19, care packages were discouraged.

Because federal and state regulations require that personal needs accounts maintain a positive balance at all times, facilities are diligent in their oversight, contacting families and responsible parties before funds are actually depleted. Our members indicate that if families and responsible parties are unable or unwilling to provide the resources, they met the need through donations, staff members or other facility funds. I think it is appropriate for this Committee to consider whether it is fair to continue asking families, responsible parties and facilities to pick up the slack all the time.

This bill calls for a \$30 increase for both nursing home and assisted living residents. Historically, the number one reason why attempts to increase the PNA have failed is simply because there were insufficient state funds to support it at the end of the session. Our members agree with the bill's sponsors, that after 36 years, an increase is long overdue. Thank you for your consideration.