



TESTIMONY

In Support of

**LD 578, Resolve Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 113:
Regulations Governing the Licensing and Functioning of Assisted Housing
Programs: Infection Prevention and Control, a Major Substantive Rule of the
Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Licensing and
Certification**

**Patricia Thorsen
Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

March 17, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Patricia Thorsen. I am the Ombudsman Program Manager. The Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is a statewide non-profit organization that provides advocacy for older adults and adults with disabilities who receive long-term services and supports in all settings. We serve residents in nursing homes, assisted housing including residential care and assisted living facilities, adult day programs and recipients of home care services. Additionally, we serve patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing long-term services and supports.

We are pleased to provide testimony in support of these regulations for Assisted Housing Programs because they are essential in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant risk of this virus to older adults and adults with disabilities living in congregate settings. Maine was ahead of other states implementing emergency rules focused on infection control for nursing facilities. We supported those regulations as a needed step to provide greater protection to residents. These regulations mirror those implemented in nursing facilities. The Ombudsman Program had the opportunity to review the draft rules to provide input.

Early in the pandemic, we worked with the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services, Division of Licensing and Certification and Maine CDC to carry out infection control surveys in all long-term care facilities across the state. This was helpful in determining infection control practices and providing education to assist facilities to carry out best practices in infection control. Additionally, the Office of Aging and Disability Services engaged infection control consultants to support facilities with infection control and prevention practices.

These regulations are critical in guiding Assisted Housing Programs through the pandemic and in protecting residents from COVID-19.

Thank you for your consideration.