

TO: The Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

RE: LD 415, Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services To Increase MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Targeted Case Management Services To Reflect Inflation

DATE: April 15, 2021

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

My name is David Cowing, I live in Woolwich, and I'm a founding member of ***Community Connect Maine***. Our mission is to connect families, caregivers, and communities to raise the standards of care for people with developmental disabilities and related conditions throughout Maine. I'd like to speak in support of LD 415.

First, I'd like to thank Representative Meyers and Representative Stearns for cosponsoring this important bill and recognize Representative Meyer's similar efforts in the previous legislature.

Because my son (Jay) has an intellectual disability as well as other disabilities, he has received state-financed community case management services for over 25 years. When Jay aged out of his high school special education program, his mom and I scrambled to find appropriate community-based services. It was pretty hard-going for quite some time as we tried to keep our jobs while ensuring Jay's health and safety during the day. We always relied on Jay's case manager to guide us through these challenging times. When it came to navigating the complicated adult service system, and trying to ensure Jay had the support that he required, we were continually dependent on his case manager.

Effective oversight and advocacy in the world of adult services requires a complex skill set and a deep knowledge base. Families like mine continue to rely on a skilled case manager to guide the way. And what a skilled case manager provides to many individuals and families is much more than just making a connection to *x* service or *y* agency.

A good adult case manager gets to know an individual and family, often in intimate ways. They must be knowledgeable about the local community, and also be knowledgeable about resources that are available in that community. A case manager needs to be fluent

in all the MaineCare (Medicaid) approved services that are appropriate and available to clients with I/DD, and must have deep knowledge of the (often changeable) regulations and rules that govern those services. Case managers become an active presence in the network of supports for individuals and families while maintaining a professional perspective and adhering to their legal and job requirements. Inevitably, the job is a very demanding one.

The complexity of the system that supports people with IDD requires that someone who is helping families and individuals navigate this system possess a robust set of skills to successfully fulfill the job requirements. But this essential role often becomes an initial entry-level job for a recent college graduate looking for work in social services. Faced with the serious responsibilities, low pay, and high demands that come with the position, many soon look elsewhere for professional advancement and move on. This turnover represents a serious loss of systemic knowledge and perspective. A new case manager has to start all over, learning all the complicated regulations and procedures. They must become familiar with how the system really works and get to know the client and community in which they live. Those knowledgeable about case management estimate that it takes two to three years of concentrated effort and training to become effective at the job.

While case managers have a direct impact on access to services and the quality of life of those they work to support, the compensation they receive is not commensurate with the job demands and responsibilities. While they are in many respects the lynchpin of the system of supports for people like my son, they are often not appropriately recognized for their key role. Making significant personal and financial sacrifices should not be part of their job requirements. There should be real incentives that allow for the recruitment and retention of case managers. Increasing their pay and bringing in the additional federal matching dollars is the appropriate thing to do.

My hope is that this committee will support LD 415.

Thank you for your time today.

David Cowing, Woolwich
Community Connect Maine
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(207) 443 4968

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