



Re: **LD 1267**, Resolve, To Provide Medicaid Rate Increases for Professionals Working with Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities In support of raising rate of workforce of direct care workers and **LD 1157**, An Act To Ensure MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Home and Community based Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Are Adjusted in Accordance with Increases in State and Municipal Minimum Wage;

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Kim Humphrey and I am from Auburn. I am the mother of an adult with autism living in a group home and I am the founder and President of Community Connect Maine, a 501c3 organization. It is a grassroots family driven network with the mission of connecting families, caregivers and communities to improving the system of care for the Developmental Disabilities (DD) community and related conditions. Our vision is that all people have the support they need, when they need it, to live full lives within their communities of choice. I am in support of increasing the rate of reimbursement to direct care workers and to adjust it in accordance with the increase in state and municipal minimum wage.

Clearly with all of these LD's on the schedule for today, which I support, show great awareness of the necessity of increasing rates to keep up with minimum wage. Please increase the rates across the board to direct care workers to 125% above minimum wage in an automatic ongoing way. It is important to note the Long Term Care Workforce Commission came to that conclusion at the end of 2019. Lots of time, energy and heartache occur by looking at the system of care in a piece meal way. Individuals, families and providers have been returning every year to plead with you to keep services from collapsing as temporary rate increases are allocated. And as a result of the fact that partial funding was allocated is sometimes stated as the reason for ignoring that the underlying problem isn't yet resolved. ***The pandemic has exacerbated this crisis, but also provides an opportunity to resolve it with increased federal funds coming to our state.***

I participated as a consumer/parent voice on the Long Term Care Workforce Commission in the fall of 2019 and agree with their recommendations of implementation for the 125% above minimum wage, rate increase for across the board direct care workers. The full process of this bill was dropped due to the pandemic and I look forward to supporting a similar bill in this session.

While working to reform the system of care and understand underlying rate structures, please also pay diligence to the lives of people living in a system that is in crisis now. Having personally experienced the horror of what it is like when no appropriate resources are available for a family member that desperately needs them, please don't place families at risk for losing resources by not doing enough to keep them viable. There is also a critical need to serve Mainers with ID/DD or Autism on the waitlist. Currently providers have had

to consolidate programs and are challenged to take people off of the waitlist, especially Mainers with behavioral issues, even after these worthy, vulnerable Mainers have been granted a waiver for these crucial support services.

People cannot change who they are or what they need to fit the structure of a service system. The rates for providers and DSP wages must be able to sustain quality programming. That means they must be competitive to jobs such as gas station clerks. ***DSPs are trained to understand and support the complex needs of the individuals they support. These skills are far more valuable than 125% above minimum wage. They provide the people they support the opportunity to more fully participate in life and in their communities, because they support their basic daily needs!***

I sincerely believe the long term cost of care will go down and the quality will improve when the system is continually structured to fit the needs of the people and not the other way around. I urge you support now, a fully viable, consistent direct care workforce rate.

Thank you for your consideration.

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