



Senator Lisa Keim
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0003
(207) 287-1505
Lisa.Keim@legislature.maine.gov

Judiciary Committee
Government Oversight Committee

Testimony of Senator Lisa Keim before the Joint Standing Committee on
Health & Human Services

LD 878, “Resolve, To Increase MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Services
Provided by Direct Care Workers

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services. I am Lisa Keim, and I proudly represent the citizens of Senate District 18, which includes much of Northern Oxford County and two communities in Androscoggin County. I am here today to introduce, “Resolve, To Increase MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Services Provided by Direct Care Workers.

The summary of this resolve is simple but its impact has the potential to be life changing for many of Maine’s most vulnerable citizens. This resolve increases reimbursement rates to direct care workers by no less than \$2 an hour. I know folks after me will testify that an increase of 25% would be appropriate, and I support that effort. In doing so, I hope more people will choose to partake in this important work.

This legislation may look familiar to many on the committee. It is mirrored after LD 2109 from the 129th Legislature. This committee passed that bill, as amended, unanimously. The language before you today is that amended language.

According to a News Center Maine article, updated December 31, 2020, “Despite being on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, most DSP's earn only close to minimum wage.” Here in lies the problem. As Maine continues to increase the minimum wage, we have struggled with a shortage of direct care workers, as low MaineCare reimbursement rates often leave agencies without enough funds to adequately pay their employees and afford other expenses. The work that direct care workers do is vital, but it is also extremely difficult and sometimes emotionally and physically taxing. Though some people find this work to be their passion, when they can work elsewhere with far less responsibility and stress, for the same amount of money, they choose to do so.

I urge the committee to pass the legislation before you today so that direct care workers are adequately paid based on the services they provide. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.