

Dixie Redmond  
Hampden

April 21, 2021

To Chairman Ned Claxton, Chairwoman Michelle Meyer and the Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services:

I would like to express support for LD 962, An Act To Appropriate Funds to Eliminate Waiting Lists for Home and Community-based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related Conditions."

In 2020, I presented testimony for the previous version of this bill. You can find that heartfelt testimony here. It still applies. I am not able to attend the live hearing today.

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=138168>

I can truthfully say I was in awe of the work that your committee does and the thoughtful questions you asked. Thank you.

In March of 2020 the world turned upside down and the larger population experienced the isolation that people with autism, developmental and intellectual disabilities have been experiencing for years without services. I am not exaggerating.

To provide access to the community for people who have autism, developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities or brain injury, two things must be done:

Funds must be appropriated to open the official waiver gates for people to try to find services.

Wages paid to Direct Support Professionals must be increased so that people with experience and knowledge about disabilities and language development, etc. apply for these jobs. It shouldn't be a stepping stone to other jobs, being a direct care professional should be a \*career choice\*. It requires a professional skillset. While I respect the work done by agencies, increases in funding should be codified to be sure that it goes to workers. And the wages paid to direct support professionals should always be greater than minimum wage, in order to attract people who have experience and knowledge.

Budgets reflect what is valued. I hope that the appropriations process this year will reflect that Maine respects and values disabled people, and recognizes their need for services.

Respectfully submitted,

Dixie Redmond