

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent and we are committed to creating a state of Maine where everyone has what they need, everyone contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

I am proud to testify in favor of Representative Rebecca Millett's LD 1490. An Act To Improve Home and Community-based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related Conditions.

LD 1490 is an important companion to the waitlist bills we heard this morning. It would do a couple of crucial things:

1. LD 1490 would create transparency and accountability by requiring DHHS to post about wait lists, time on wait lists, make projections about wait lists, and tell the legislature what kind of appropriations would be required to prevent such wait lists in the future. That would ensure that older and disabled Mainers never again face the unacceptable waits they are facing today. LDs 962, 499, and 1360 would clear the wait lists we face today and LD 1490 would ensure that we don't recreate them tomorrow.
2. LD 1490 would establish the principle that reimbursement rates should be high enough that they don't stand in the way of actually delivering services. It would also broaden the input that DHHS has to get on system design, ensuring that those most affected by the system have input on it.

Imagine that our state is a massive cruise liner. Unfortunately, our ship is taking on water and older and disabled Mainers are being treated like third class passengers on the bottom levels. The water keeps rising as they languish longer and longer on these ever-growing waitlists. At first, as younger and fully abled Mainers we don't realize it. But it starts to affect our children, our siblings, our friends, our teachers, our coworkers, and our parents. Then it rises a bit more and we have to leave our jobs, close our small businesses or quit school to try to care for friends and family members.

LDs 962, 499, and 1360 would bail the water out of our ship. LD 1490 would plug the hole and ensure that we never crash again. Together, we can steer our ship in the right direction and create a Maine where no one is left behind. Thank you.