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Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Myer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1573 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues.

My name is Stella Cain and I have dedicated years of my life to supporting individuals with Autism and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities. I have had many jobs but being a DSP is one that feeds my soul. There has always been high turnover in this field, but the pandemic has made it harder on all levels. We have lost people because they can easily go do a less stressful job for more money. Many have started and do not come back because they realize doing this job, my job, is asking for a lot of sacrifices. The biggest being truly little work life balance because we must work far more to make ends meet for our families and our agencies.

Without this work life balance, we are tired. Burnout beyond belief. We go above and beyond and low wages are hurting some of the most vulnerable people, the people we support. They do not get consistent staffing. Without consistent staffing their lives do not run as smoothly as they should. Maine does not value DSP's. When the pandemic hit guess who was left out of temporary state increases for direct care workers? We were. The people I support are consistently wondering if staff will be quitting. They do not deserve to stress over that.

Health and safety are number one but when there are just not enough people to cover every aspect of life that needs to be addressed for these folks' things can and do happen.

Personally, this week I was out of work due to a medical issue and 5 people went without support because there was no one to fill in. I would love to see our state respect the work we do so that less of us are sacrificing and there are more quality supports for these amazing people. Pay us like what we do saves lives because it does. We are worthy of being able to afford housing, food, clothing, and time off. We are worthy of having good lives that let us return to those we support renewed and ready to take on new challenges.

Sincerely,
Stella Cain
DSP at OHI
From Bangor