

May 3, 2021

Testimony **FOR** LD 1573, “An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues”

Chairman Claxton, Chairwoman Meyer, Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Alan Cobo-Lewis. I live in Orono. I have two 20-year-old sons, one of whom has a significant disability. That son is currently receiving children’s services and is undergoing transition to adult services.

My testimony from the April 20 public hearing on the workforce bills applies to this bill as well. I appreciate the time and attention you are giving to workforce and wait list issues, so I will not repeat [that testimony](#).

I simply wanted to note that I have reviewed the written testimony against the workforce bills by the Office of MaineCare Services, and I have a rejoinder, as I anticipate similar testimony against LD 1573. While there are some differences in the OMS testimony against the workforce various bills, I’d say that a key commonality was the assurance that bills on swift rate and wage hikes—such as LD 1573 would also produce—are not needed at this time.

We all live in a market economy. And, with all due respect to the Department, the OMS testimony feels out of touch with the current state of the labor market.

I remind the Committee of the following:

- My son actually got a waiver offer based on his significant level of need,
- We have identified a provider to fill the need that he will have for a significant amount of in-home support upon transition from children services to adult services, and
- The community service provider has been advertising (now for an additional week and a half since the previous public hearing).
- But the provider still has so far received ***zero applicants for the job***.

The rates in Maine’s Home and Community Based Services are inadequate to support DSP wages that can compete with wages in other Maine industries that tap the same labor pool. I frankly question if 125% of minimum wage will even be enough.

The direct support workforce was in crisis even before the pandemic, and now it’s in full flame. Please act now.