



**Testimony of Richard A. Hooks Wayman  
President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England**

**Testimony in Favor of LD 1573**

**An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues  
5/3/2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Richard Hooks Wayman, and I am testifying in support of LD 1573 on behalf of Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOA). VOA is a statewide nonprofit and faith-based organization dedicated to serving those in need. I serve as the President & CEO of VOA, and I reside in Portland. Our administrative offices are in Brunswick, but VOA offers nearly 30 different housing and social service programs across twelve communities and seven counties in Maine. VOA is proud to offer high-quality housing and services to keep older Mainers and persons with disabilities in their communities. We are also well known for our work in supporting U.S. veterans experiencing homelessness and for improving public safety through our community justice reentry services.

This bill implements some of the key recommendations from the [report of Commission to Study Long Term Care Workforce Issues](#) and will establish a minimum wage for many direct care workers that will automatically increase in future years and will mandate 'rebased' of rates for home care professionals every two years. Additionally, we support this bill because it will establish an Essential Care Workforce Oversight Advisory Committee to keep the state on track in creating a highly professional direct care workforce.

As a social service organization we believe in creating an organizational culture that recognizes and celebrates the meaningful and critical work performed by direct care professionals. Whether due to aging, disability, or illness, most of us will require the assistance of direct care professionals in our lifetime, and our communities must begin to invest in these services through livable wages and professional training and advancement.

Furthermore, our faith and values call us to speak on this matter to recognize the dignity of all direct care professionals and the impact this will have as a matter of equity. The care workforce is dominated by women, often women of color and women new to this country, who are historically underpaid. Our communities deserve access to quality, predictable, timely care by people qualified and motivated to do the work, which must be reflected in the fair wages we offer.

The state Department of Health and Human Services' proposed rate setting process is flawed given its failure to consider or examine what the private market is paying for workers for the same level of care and service. Any MaineCare reimbursement rate that does not consider market forces and private pay salaries will not be sufficient to allow providers to compete for workers in the current environment.

Thank you for considering my remarks in support of LD 1573, and thank you for your public services to the citizens of Maine.