



To :Health and Human Service Committee

RE: L.D. 1573 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues

Date: May 3, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Kim Humphrey and I am from Auburn. I am the mother of an adult with severe autism living in a group home and I am the Founder and President of Community Connect Maine, a 501c3 organization. It is a grassroots family driven network with the mission of connecting families, caregivers and communities to improving the system of care for the Developmental Disabilities (DD) community and related conditions. Our vision is that all people have the support they need, when they need it, to live full lives within their communities of choice.

I participated as a consumer/family voice on the Long Term Care workforce Commission in the fall of 2019 and agree with all of their recommendations. To be competitive, the direct care the workforce across the board in Maine need wages at least 125% above minimum wage. The full process of this bill was dropped due to the pandemic and at last it has reemerged. I urge you to fully support it.

It is admirable for DHHS to take on reforming the system of care and understand underlying rate structures, In the meantime, how have these urgent factors been addressed?

1. How many people:

- are desperately in need of a placement and are finding nothing?
- have a placement now and at risk of losing it?
- have lost their placement and are now in a crisis bed?
- will end up in an ER, a hospital, homeless or in jail if nothing changes?
- will be injured or self-injured because there is not enough support to provide what is needed?
- have family members missing work to find a solution to a crisis for which they have almost no control?
- have behavioral needs that will increase by putting off addressing immediate needs?
- have lost support staff who left the field for higher paying jobs?

2. How many hard to replace resources have already been lost and how many more will be lost without sufficient action taken now?

3. How many of the families or staff functioning with inadequate resources will be in greater need of healthcare, mental health, and medicine because their situations are traumatic?

Have these costs for real Mainers been estimated and are they part of the equation in the decision making process of our state?

I know the horror of what it is like when no appropriate resources are available for a family member that desperately needs them. In the direct care workforce, experienced people are a valuable resource. If they leave the field because of low wages, it takes time to replace their knowledge. Please restore and protect Maine's workforce resource by fully supporting this bill.

Currently providers have had to consolidate programs and are challenged to take people off of the waitlists because they cannot find direct care workers. People, especially people with behavioral issues, have found it difficult to find a placement even after receiving a waiver. Hearing about the group homes that have had to consolidate and the people that have one by one, lost placements is terrifying. If this happened to my son, I don't know of alternative options for him. Fully supporting this bill is critical to the IDD population.

People cannot change who they are or what they need to fit the structure of a service system. The rates for providers and direct care worker wages must be able to sustain quality programming. That means they must be competitive to jobs such as gas station clerks. ***The skills of direct care workers to understand and support the complex needs of the individuals they support is far more valuable than 125% above minimum wage. They provide the people they support the opportunity to more fully participate in life and in their communities, because they support their basic daily needs! My heart is full of appreciation and gratitude for them. They deserve to have dignified pay.***

I sincerely believe the long term cost of care will go down and the quality will improve when the system is continually structured to fit the needs of the people and not the other way around. I urge you support now, a fully viable, consistent direct care workforce rate. ***We have a rare opportunity to take advantage of extra federal funding to fully fix a long standing problem that affects many Maine citizens.*** Please vote to fully support LD 1573.

Thank you for your consideration.

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