

**Testimony of Betsy Mahoney, Community Outreach Coordinator,
Autism Society of Maine, in Support of LD 1573, An Act To Implement the
Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues**



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Good morning Senator Claxton, Rep. Meyers and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Betsy Mahoney and I am the Community Outreach Coordinator of the Autism Society of Maine. I am also the parent of a 30-year-old with autism, intellectual disabilities and a mental health diagnosis who lives in a group home under a Medicaid waiver. I am testifying today on behalf of the Autism Society of Maine in support of LD 1573, An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues.

Two weeks ago, I testified on behalf of the Autism Society in favor of a number of bills addressing the shortage of direct support providers by increasing MaineCare reimbursement rates. Those included:

- LD 283, Resolve, To Address Inequities for Certain Direct Care Workers,
- LD 1157, An Act To Ensure MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Home and Community-based Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Are Adjusted in Accordance with Increases in State and Municipal Minimum Wage,
- LD 1204, An Act To Address the Shortage of Direct Care Workers for Children with Disabilities in Maine, and
- LD 1267, Resolve, To Provide Medicaid Rate Increases for Professionals Working with Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities,

In my testimony on those bills, I cited the critical and growing shortage of direct service provider who work with individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities. I also noted the extensive, thorough and important work of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues, which issued its final report in January 2020, and suggested that this committee and the Maine Legislature as a whole enact a bill that would implement the Commission's recommendations. As you know, this Committee began work on such a bill during the last session, but its efforts came to a halt due to the pandemic.

I applaud the bill's requirements that the Department of Health and Human Services:

- establish a 2-year rebasing requirement to set and increase reimbursement rates for in-home and community support services,
- pay direct care workers no less than 125% of the minimum wage, and
- establish the Long-term Care Workforce Oversight Advisory Committee to collect and compile data related to workforce shortages and services provided to clients

I appreciate the efforts of this Committee to improve the lives of both individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities and those who professionally support them. I urge you to vote ought to pass LD 1573.