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### **Written Testimony in Support of LD 1573**

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

#### **Health and Human Services Committee**

**Monday, May 3, 2021**

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*.

Good morning. My name is Marie Gray and, unfortunately, a previous commitment made it impossible for me to attend this committee meeting in person. I am currently serving as Board President for Group Main Stream (GMS) and I am also a retired senior staff member for Region I of the Department of Health and Human Services. In both of these roles, I have observed and interacted from several perspectives with both State and independent agency-provided services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

GMS has not been able to maintain and sustain a stable workforce for several years. Although the skill sets, training requirements and job demands are equal to those of higher paying healthcare jobs such as CNAs, phlebotomists and psych techs, our greatest competition for this workforce are employers such as McDonalds, Shaw's, and Wal-Mart. Many of these employers can pay higher hourly rates and offer jobs far less demanding than that of a DSP. You are all well aware that it is not only demanding but also rewarding work. It is also often times exhausting and frustrating work, as well. It requires a range of skills that can, and often are, put in play throughout each and every work day. Not everyone is capable or desires to do this line of work but for those individuals who choose to they must be paid equitably.

Our agency as well as other agencies throughout the State has, and continues to, experience a constant turnover of direct care staff. DSPs are leaving for better paying jobs that are less demanding both physically and emotionally, less stressful and do not require a significant amount of ongoing training.

The Board has reviewed this situation and has tried to act proactively to increase the salaries, fringe benefits, and recognition for DSPs but we cannot continue to do that and remain financially and programmatically viable without a corresponding increase in the reimbursement rate from the State.

With your support of LD 1573, individuals served can live and thrive in their chosen communities and Direct Support Professionals can earn a livable wage and provide for their families.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of LD 1573.

Sincerely,

Marie Gray

Marie Gray  
Board President, GMS  
Portland