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Written Testimony in Support of LD 1574

An Act To Ensure Support for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism with High Behavioral Need

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 1574

An Act To Ensure Support for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism with High Behavioral Need

My name is Ann-Marie Mayberry and I am honored to be the executive director of GMS. GMS is a non-profit organization serving individuals with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism in 14 counties across Maine. For four decades GMS has designed and maintained programs that enhance, support, and teach through knowledge, respect, and dignity. We are dedicated to serving the community while working collaboratively with the people we support, guardians, family members, agencies, caseworkers, and other advocates. The people we support live, work, volunteer and socialize in their communities with support from dedicated Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). We provide therapeutic and supportive residential homes, Shared Living homes, in-home support, community support and case management services to over 300 people. We employ 150 full and part-time staff as well as 120 contracted providers who support individuals residing in their home under the Shared Living model.

People with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism in Maine with high behavioral needs are losing services due to a severe workforce crisis caused by reimbursement rates below minimum wage. The crisis is compounded by the lack of a behavioral add-on which would reimburse providers at a higher rate to cover additional costs when supporting challenging behaviors such as clinical oversight, additional staff training, and specialized housing and equipment. Due to behavior, homes incur more damages and require special modifications for safety. Because of this we often purchase a home or modify an existing facility to best serve the individual. Most often, leasing is not an option due to destruction of property, loud noises, and police and crisis intervention.

As with similar agencies throughout the state, GMS is not able to support people with challenging behaviors. We do not have the staffing capacity to fill open hours at the current rate of reimbursement. Supporting a person with significant and persistent behavioral challenges requires a skilled team of people with qualifications in managing challenging behaviors. At \$12.15 an hour it is unrealistic to assume an agency is able to provide habilitation, skill building, community inclusion and clinical oversight of safety and behavioral plans.

With your support of LD 1574, individuals served can live and thrive in their chosen communities and safely be supported. College students, graduates and others who wish to embark on a rewarding and satisfying career will be able to gain valuable experiences working in a human service profession. Through increased opportunities for the inclusion of an often-marginalized population, communities are enriched through diversity, and the Maine economy benefits from a growing workforce of human service professionals.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of LD 1574.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann-Marie Mayberry".

Ann-Marie Mayberry
Cape Elizabeth