

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*.

My name is Carol Snyder and I live in Alfred, Maine. I have a fairly unique perspective as I started out as a Direct Support Professional in the 1980's and for the past ten years have been a Human Resources Professional.

First, no one who comes into our field expects to make a lot of money. If you want to make a lot of money you work in technology, medicine, or law. You do not go into social services.

The Direct Support Professional is required to provide a level of service that involves an extraordinary amount of commitment, diligence, and sacrifice. There can be long hours. Those hours include evenings, weekends, holidays, and other times when most people do not have to work. They may go without sleep. They may have to do physically demanding tasks such as lifting adults with limited mobility in order to bathe them. They may have detail-oriented tasks such as dispensing medications accurately for multiple people. They may have emotionally demanding responsibilities such as supporting people having mental or behavioral health crises. They come to work during the worst times of the pandemic because their work is considered essential. Sometimes they work in homes with active outbreaks, and they run the risk of becoming sick themselves or bringing an illness home to their families. They are subject to a very high degree of scrutiny and may be called upon to explain or justify their reactions to certain events or situations. They do the job because they are devoted to the people they support. When you conduct employee satisfaction surveys, the biggest reward and motivator for the Direct Support Professional is always – ***always*** – the individuals they support.

What are these professionals worth to the people of the State of Maine? Surely, they are worth at least as much as someone working in retail or food services, where people are not paid minimum wage and may have fringe benefits (employee discounts?) not offered to DSPs. Surely, there must be some room in the funding to allow for modest wage increases for seasoned DSPs or those with specialized training or skills.

For any social service agency, personnel cost is the largest expense. In our field, not only are there basic payroll expenses, but other administrative costs such as compliance with background checks, mandatory trainings, and in recent days, lots of personal protective equipment and sanitization supplies. Imagine being told that raises will be minimal because we are spending the money on personal protective equipment or ever-rising insurance costs.

I have already addressed the greatest motivator for our staff. Their biggest complaint? Not enough money. Unless the DSP works many hours and gets regular overtime, most simply do not earn enough to pay their bills. As a human resources professional, I attend many recruiting events, and many tell me outright that they cannot accept a position that pays what I can afford to offer. This is a problem. If I cannot recruit, hire, and retain good employees, we will not be able to provide the supports that so many individuals and their families expect and deserve. Please. Show them that you understand that they are worth more than minimum wage. I thank you.

Carol Snyder
Alfred, Maine

I do not want to testify in person