



Senator Claxton, Representative Meyers , and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent and we are committed to creating a state of Maine where everyone has what they need, everyone contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

I am here to testify in favor of LD 1573, "An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues." As you all may remember, in 2018 Maine People's Alliance led a ballot initiative to guarantee universal home care to the 26,000 older Mainers and people with disabilities who need home care, but don't have access to it.

While there was a policy debate on how to pay for universal home care, but proponents and opponents of the referendum agreed on many of the basics. Those were:

- Maine has a major shortage of direct care workers. We have the oldest median population in the nation and desperately need to invest in our direct care workforce.
- Low pay is the largest impediment to attracting the home care workers that we need.
- Low rates make it difficult for home care businesses to provide an alternative option to nursing homes that allows older Mainers and people with disabilities to stay in their homes.
- Any substantive policy solution has to raise wages and raise rates.

Representative Fay,'s legislation, LD 1573, does just that. It establishes a minimum wage for some (but not all) direct care worker jobs that is set at 125% higher than minimum wage and is automatically increased. It requires "rebased" of rates for home care every two years (this kind of rebasing has kept nursing homes afloat and should be required in home care). It requires the Department to establish rates that consider the costs of providing care and services in conformity with applicable state and federal laws, rules, regulations, training requirements and quality and safety standards. Finally, LD 1573 establishes the Long Term Care Workforce Oversight Advisory Committee (which needs to be changed to the Essential Care Workforce Oversight Advisory Committee) to ensure compliance with the above and to track understaffed hours and worker demand.

LD 1573 will help us attract the direct service providers our state needs and gets us closer to universal home care. Thank you.