

betsy sawyer-manter
SeniorsPlus

Testimony in Support of LD 1573 - An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study the Long-term Care Workforce Issues

Good day, Senator Claxton, Representative Myers and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Betsy Sawyer-Manter; I am the CEO of SeniorsPlus, one of the five Agency's on Aging in the state serving Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford counties, and also the statewide provider of care coordination for those seeking to remain in their homes. The goal of SeniorsPlus is to assist older and disabled people to age well so that they are able to stay at home, independently, as long as possible.

In the provision of care coordination, SeniorsPlus assists over 4200 people in the state of Maine to remain at home and out of institutional care. Our role is to coordinate the care for qualified individuals. The major coordination involves working with direct care organizations to staff the care plans for our clients. We are still unable to find more than 10,000 hours a week of personal care coverage. Direct care is the backbone of the long term services and supports programs and these incredible workers support older and disabled Mainers by providing assistance with such things as bathing, transporting, dressing, toileting and other intimate assistance.

The workers who choose this profession are committed to the clients they serve often becoming like members of the family who come and go, often on a daily basis. It is a low paying, manual job that requires patience, caring and training.

I had the honor of serving on the Commission to Study the Long-term Care Workforce Issues. The Commission took its charge very seriously and spent significant time reviewing data, hearing expert testimony and exploring many options before finding agreement on a number of strategies to help address the shortage of workers.

I support LD 1573. It is critically important that this not become another Commission study that gets put on a shelf and goes no further. Maine cannot afford for that to happen. We are desperately in need of more workers particularly as the number of people in Maine are aging into the Long Term Services and Supports System. By supporting LD 1573 it creates a Long-term Workforce Oversight Advisory Committee that will monitor the system, the ongoing challenges and the improvements. It establishes a rate review methodology that ensures predictability and stability.

Thank you for reading my testimony.