

Amy Jane Larkin
Arundel

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Amy Larkin, I am a resident of Arundel and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 296.

My husband and I live with my 98-year-old grandmother, Eva, who's in remarkable physical and mental shape for someone years younger. Still, a few years after my mom passed away, it became clear she could no longer live alone. We're grateful to have made that decision three years ago, and particularly thankful to have been together through this past year.

The pandemic has made things more challenging for caregivers across the state while highlighting the importance of being able to receive care at home. More Mainers are making the difficult decision to care for their loved ones in the home as we do. The fear of bringing in outsiders made getting help more difficult and our isolation increased. Mental health became much more of a struggle, especially in those cold winter months.

In an average week I spend around 15-20 hours helping my grandmother, but when a recurring eye infection pops up or when she fell and injured her knee last summer, the hours needed to care for her and take her to appointments can nearly double with no predictability. My husband and I are fortunate to have worked from home for over a decade now. My situation is pretty much the best-case scenario, and it still means a loss of earnings. I worry particularly about working enough to pay for my healthcare. But I am lucky because I don't have to ask a boss for permission to take time off, and I know so many of my fellow Mainers do not have that flexibility. I don't know how I would care for my grandmother with a regular job.

Caregivers all around the state, [around 181,000 of us](#), are [facing employment challenges in the form of reduced hours, income and benefits](#). Many of them lose their jobs or have to retire early to do this very important work. And so many of the folks suffering the consequences are women. Women and especially women of color are more likely to take on these roles, and this is another reason women aren't returning to work after losing their jobs due to the pandemic.

My husband and I are just two of thousands and thousands of fellow Mainers who put our time, energy, and heart into caring for our family members at home. This is important work that helps keep our family members safe and well. It keeps Maine functioning, especially as a state with such an aged population. I think we as a state should do anything we can to acknowledge and support our caregivers. While \$2000 won't solve everything for our families, it's an important and substantial first step. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of LD 296. Thank you so much for listening today.