

My name is Martha Naber, I am a resident of Westbrook, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 296.

In December 2003, my husband's mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She had four to six months to live upon receiving her diagnosis. Our family did everything we could to provide her with a high quality of life in her last few months. Mom felt it was important to be in her own home. At the time, both Don and I were working, but we altered our lives as much as we could to take care of Mom, who relied on many services including hospice, home health, medical, Meals on Wheels, and more. We helped Mom pay her bills, do laundry, coordinate daily medical appointments, complete Gould assessments for her eligibility for home health services each week, administer and document her medication. Most importantly, we provided her with companionship. Eventually Mom's conditions worsened. She was on oxygen and needed a hospital bed. Don and I took turns staying overnight to provide care for her.

In 2010 my mother developed dementia and moved to a group residence. My sister, a school teacher, would get called in the middle of the day and have to leave work because of our mother's medical emergencies. How we wished we could have brought her home, but no one in our family was in a place to do that. My sister and I had to provide additional vigilance, care, and support even while our mother was in group residence, where entry-level caregivers were barely getting paid above minimum wage, the quality of care and high staff turnover were big big issues that are relevant today. We need to make caregiving more equitable. The state of Maine has the oldest population. Care for the elderly cannot be overlooked. I'm concerned about the lack of training, support, and wages for caregivers. Otherwise, who's going to be around to care for us?

My family and I were lucky to have access to the resources available to us at the time, but people in more rural parts of Maine may not have access to services we had. They may be doing many more hours of hands-on care. I wish family caregivers could get paid. Caregiving requires a lot of time and energy and in-depth support. The family caregiver bill recognizes the value of caregivers and the important work they do, which is why I support LD 296.

Thank you,
Martha Naber