



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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### **Testimony In favor of LD 898**

### **An Act To Provide Incentives to Unemployed Workers To Become Part of the Caregiver Workforce**

**May 5, 2021**

Sen. Hickman, Rep. Sylvester and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, I am Jessica Fay representing the people of House District 66, parts of Casco, Poland and Raymond. I am here to introduce LD 898 “An Act To Provide Incentives to Unemployed Workers To Become Part of the Caregiver Workforce”

In 2019 I served as the House Chair of the Commission to Study Long-Term Care Workforce Issues which made twenty-nine recommendations aimed at alleviating the direct care workforce shortage. I have come before this Committee before and laid out background regarding the crisis. If you would like, I am happy to go into detail on that again, but will only do so if the Committee requests it- in the interest of time. I will provide a link to the report in my written testimony.

<http://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3852>

This bill, which began as a concept draft, was conceived to try to put language around three of those twenty-nine recommendations.

Because we haven't yet been able to get to a place where many in the essential caregiving workforce are earning a living wage, and because so many people in this workforce are limiting their hours because they depend on some forms of public assistance to make ends meet, and because there are folks doing this critical work who might be eligible for some assistance but are unaware of that eligibility, we are proposing a pilot program to address these issues.

The program is proposed so that people entering this workforce either from the ranks of the unemployed or from other careers will have access to a benefits navigator who can help them develop an individual career plan as well as direct them to help they might be

eligible for. It also includes people currently in the workforce who might be having trouble making ends meet, helps them access benefits and career ladders – which you have heard about in Rep. Griffin’s bill LD 786.

The details are provided in the draft legislation in front of you and I would be very happy to work with the Committee to find a path forward for this proposal. The issues surrounding the long-term care workforce shortage are complex and will require multiple solutions that address the multi-layered reasons for the workforce shortage. I believe that this crisis deserves as many creative solutions as we can identify because people’s lives and livelihoods are at stake.

I am happy to try to answer any questions either now or at the work session.