

January 31, 2022

Testimony in Support of LD 898: An Act to Create the Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee

Dear Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

I write briefly in support of LD 898 as revised/amended to create an essential support Workforce Advisory Committee.

Founded in 1978, Alpha One is Maine's first and only Center for Independent Living, assisting people with disabilities statewide. Through its Independent Living services, Alpha One serves disabled adults throughout the state who act as their own employer, hiring personal care attendants to assist them with the activities of daily living that they cannot manage on their own as a result of a disability. Through such consumer directed-personal care attendant services, people with a significant disability are able to remain in their homes and in the community, thereby avoiding institutionalization in a residential care facility. Alpha One is also a Service Coordination Agency serving more than 2,000 disabled consumers statewide, some of whom rely on the home care staffing agencies for their needed direct care workers and some of whom endeavor to act as their own employers and self-direct their care. In all cases, the shortage of direct care workers is dire and threatening to foreclose altogether the ability of disabled adults in Maine to live independently. Since, as you have already heard, the shortage of direct care workers plagues the residential care facilities as well, disabled adults in Maine can find little recourse even if they were to choose institutionalization over independent living.

LD 898's proposal for a Workforce Advisory Committee is an effort to assemble the collective wisdom and experience of a wide range of educators, policy makers, legislators, service delivery providers, and direct workers themselves. Over the years, such groups have assembled and studied the issues, often coming up with ideas and plans of action that never quite materialize. When the same types of groups again assemble several years later, only then is it discovered that great ideas were offered years earlier but never acted on. The Workforce Advisory Committee is designed to be a collaborative body that retains the learning of earlier efforts and advocates for follow-through. Alpha One supports this collaborative effort and oversight as essential to maintaining independent living for all Maine people.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas C. Newman, Esq. (he/him/his)
Executive Director

a: 127 Main Street | South Portland, ME 04106
e: tnewman@alphaonenow.org | w: www.alphaonenow.org
p: 207-619-9227

