

Cori Cantrell
Maine State Parent Ambassadors
LD 1566

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salsbury, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Cori, and I am a resident of Exeter, a person with lived experience related to this bill and an advocate for Maine State Parent Ambassadors. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1566, which would require compensation for individuals who share their lived experiences to inform public policy.

For too long, individuals with lived experience have been asked to show up—to share deeply personal stories, give feedback, serve on panels, or advise on policies—with little or no compensation. Yet our perspectives are vital. They provide real-world insights that professionals and systems often overlook. This bill acknowledges a fundamental truth: Lived experience is expertise. And expertise deserves to be paid. As a single mom and a passionate woman, I want to help make the world a better place for my children to grow up in and raise their children. It is important to have a parent's perspective on decisions that will ultimately affect our lives and children's future. Being able to advocate for things you are passionate about is a privilege for some, others have to make financial sacrifices to show up. I don't know how I would be able to show up in this advocacy world if I was not compensated for my time. A lot of the time hearings are during the work week, and most of us work during that time. So it can be really hard to miss a day of work to testify and share your lived experience to bring life to the decisions on the table. Being compensated for sharing my story is crucial because I have to make money to support my family. Being compensated has given me the opportunity to bring my passion and lived experience to the table.

This bill sets a clear standard: if you are asking for our time, our insight, and our vulnerability, you must also offer fair compensation. This is not only about equity—it's about sustainability. Many of us are navigating difficult circumstances. Compensation makes it possible for us to keep showing up, and it sends a powerful message that our knowledge is just as valuable as any professional credential.

I urge you to support LD 1566. Valuing lived experience includes valuing our time, our expertise, and our labor. This bill helps create more equitable, inclusive, and effective systems—and it starts by paying people for what they know.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Cori Cantrell