

Testimony of Melissa Hackett
Policy Associate, Maine Children's Alliance
In support of LD 1566, An Act to Provide Compensation to Individuals with Lived
Experience Serving on Advisory Boards, Commissions, Councils
and Similar Groups
April 28, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Melissa Hackett. I am a policy associate with the Maine Children's Alliance, where I serve as the coordinator for the Maine Child Welfare Action Network. I offer testimony today in support of LD 1566.

If we want to develop effective policy proposals to address various challenges to the well-being of Maine people, it is critical that we engage with those who are most impacted. By engaging meaningfully with people with lived experience of any particular issue, we can ensure that we develop a deeper level of understanding about the challenges being faced, to inform the development of solutions that will be effective.

We cannot ask people who have this expertise to offer it freely. Those of us who serve on boards as representatives of organizations are compensated for our time to participate, while other individuals without those professional affiliations would have to volunteer their time to participate. Transportation, child care, food, work, and a general lack of time all contribute to making it too challenging for parents to engage in boards where their expertise could inform actions to improve a variety of systems children and families navigate. This is a particularly difficult barrier for parents, as we have learned in developing partnerships with parents in our own advocacy work, which now includes compensation and engagement at all points in the decision-making process.

This legislation provides an important opportunity to tell people with lived experience that we value their time and expertise – in the form of compensation. This is a small price to pay to acknowledge the other responsibilities and obligations people set aside in order to participate in these kinds of decision-making groups. It is a small price to pay to create some kind of parity among the members of the group. And it is a very small price to pay to ensure that the solutions being developed to address challenges to the well-being of Maine people are deeply informed by those individuals who are most impacted, and thus most expert.

We thank the bill sponsor for bringing forward this important legislation and urge the committee to support it. Thank you.