

Mary L Pletcher

Testimony in Support of LD 1566 An Act to Provide Compensation to Individuals with Lived Experience Serving on Advisory Boards, Commissions, Councils and Similar Groups

Date: 4/28/2025

To: The Committee On State And Local Government

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Mary Pletcher, and I am a resident of Waterville, ME a person with lived experience related to this bill. I am writing to you today 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. I feel this expertise deserves to be paid.

I have stepped up at the cost of putting aside time with my family and it's not fun. I would love to spend hours giving to people but why should it always be free? I have bills to pay. I lost MaineCare because even unemployed and on unemployment I make \$900 too much and they took away food stamps and Maine care .

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,
Mary L Pletcher
Waterville, ME