

Sara Wing
Waterville
LD 1566

Written Testimony in Support of LD 1566

Chairpersons, members of the committee,
You have undoubtedly heard the policy reasons for passing LD 1566. But today, I want to bring it closer to home. This bill is not just about fairness—though it is fair. It's not just about reducing barriers—though it does that too. At its core, LD 1566 is about valuing people. It's about recognizing the expertise that comes not from a degree or a title, but from real life. From surviving. From navigating systems that weren't designed with you in mind. And it's about finally compensating that expertise the way we would any other form of professional contribution.

Now, let me take you on a journey.

Picture a working, single mom. She has one child in public school and another in Head Start. She's seen firsthand how Head Start changed the trajectory for her family—not just educationally, but emotionally, socially, and economically. One morning, she drops her youngest off before work and hears something unsettling: Head Start funding is in danger.

She feels it in her gut. She wants to help. She is an advocate at heart.

She finds out the program is forming an advisory board. It's an opportunity to speak up, to share her experience, to protect something that has meant everything to her family. But she hesitates. Not because she doesn't care—but because she does. She's a single, working mom. Time is tight. Money is tighter. Every hour spent in a meeting is an hour not spent at work—or with her kids—or trying to manage both. She is faced with a choice that too many parents know all too well: show up for your community, or show up for your paycheck.

But then she learns something incredible: her state has a lived experience law. This law ensures that advocates like her—people with real-world expertise—are compensated for their time, their childcare, their gas, their missed wages. Suddenly, the impossible becomes possible. She can say “yes” without sacrificing her family's well-being. She can speak, and be heard, without paying the price alone.

That mother is not just an example. She's one of thousands of Maine residents whose insights are essential to crafting policy that actually works. And that mother is me.