



A broad partnership of employers, workers, and concerned individuals working to increase access to quality direct care and support in Maine by changing the way we value workers and the work they do.

December 24, 2024

President of the Senate, Matthea Elisabeth Larsen Daughtry
Senate Majority Leader, Teresa Pierce
Senate Minority Leader, Harold "Trey" Stewart, III
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Speaker of the House, Ryan Fecteau
House Majority Leader, Matt Moonen
House Minority Leader, Billy Bob Faulkingham
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear President Daughtry, Speaker Fecteau, and Leaders of the 132nd Maine Legislature,

We, the undersigned, write to express urgent concern over the Mills administration's December 2, 2024 [announcement](#) that the Department of Health and Human Services will not implement cost-of-living adjustments for MaineCare programs, including those which serve tens of thousands of older adults, people with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and people with behavioral health needs. This action violates state law and the recent DOJ settlement, exacerbates a worsening care crisis, diminishes our state's economy, and abdicates the state's responsibility to protect the health of Maine people. We ask you to immediately take action to direct the state to implement the annual cost-of-living adjustment for MaineCare services as required by 22 M.R.S.A [§3173-J](#) and [§7402](#).

We are members of the [Essential Care and Support Workforce Partnership](#), which is driven by the belief that every person who needs care and supports should be able to access them, especially those who are entitled to care paid for by MaineCare. We know that a well-trained and appropriately compensated direct care workforce is essential to the health and well-being of Maine's people and economy.

As you know, our state has long faced significant challenges in maintaining an adequate workforce able to meet the long-term supports and services needs of Mainers. Lawmakers have made critical investments to avoid catastrophic outcomes for consumers of these services. In 2021, collaboration

among legislators, DHHS, and stakeholders resulted in the codification of a system to review reimbursement rates every five years and, for all other years, implementing an automatic COLA tied to the consumer price index. Lawmakers also implemented the recommendations of the Long-Term Care Workforce Commission to annually adjust the labor components for essential support service reimbursement rates to at least 125% of the state minimum wage.

The decision to violate state statute and delay implementing the COLA will cause worse health outcomes and further reduce access to services in every corner of our state. It risks forcing provider agencies, including but not limited to private non-medical institutions (PNMIs), home care, mental and behavioral health, and home and community-based providers to people with disabilities, to close or collapse services and direct care professionals to exit the sector due to already challenging working conditions and insufficient compensation. These people care deeply about their work, but there are limits to how far they can risk their own wellbeing to continue pursuing their chosen profession. Once they leave the sector because they feel undervalued, they are unlikely to return.

In recent years, Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) has explored the [myriad costs](#) of undervaluing our direct care professionals, and the [scale of the care gap](#) that already exists. Their research finds the failure to sufficiently invest in the direct care workforce costs our economy upwards of \$1 billion in annual economic output; places significant strain on our hospital capacity; and reduces public revenue by tens of millions of dollars. MECEP finds our state needs more than 2,300 additional full-time workers to bridge the gap between the care people are entitled to and approved for and what is available. At a time when the state must make more significant investments in this system and its workers, the administration's announcement takes us in the wrong direction and will likely result in real harm to this workforce and Maine people.

We ask you to work with the administration to find the funding necessary to implement the COLA as mandated by state law. If current appropriations are insufficient to cover the full cost for this fiscal year, we call on the legislature to allocate additional funds to ensure continuity for MaineCare consumers and providers.

Sincerely, Concerned members of the Essential Care and Support Workforce Partnership
See full list on pages 3-5

cc: Co-Chairs of the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Resources, Representative Meyer and Senator Ingwersen; Kirsten Figueroa, Commissioner, Department of Administrative and Financial Services; Sara Gagné-Holmes, Commissioner, Department of Health and Human Services; Jeremy Kennedy, Chief of Staff; Bethany Beausang, Senior Policy Advisor

Concerned members of the Essential Care and Support Workforce Partnership

Employers of Essential Care & Support Workers - 47 Employers representing approximately 9,500 Essential Care & Support Workers and serving over 39,500 Maine people

Align Home Care | alignhomecareservices.com | Cumberland County

Alternative Services, NE | www.asi-ne.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Kennebec County, Oxford County, Somerset County

Andwell Health Partners | www.andwell.org | Androscoggin County, Aroostook County, Franklin County, Kennebec County, Oxford County

Aroostook Mental Health Center | www.amhc.org | Aroostook County, Hancock County, Washington County

Assistance Plus | www.assistanceplus.com/ | Franklin County, Kennebec County, Knox County, Somerset County, Central Maine

Breakwater Commons | <https://breakwatercommons.com/> | Knox County

Bridges Home Services/Spectrum Generations | www.spectrumgenerations.org | Statewide

Central Aroostook Association | www.centralaroostookassociation.com | Aroostook County

Coastal Opportunities | www.coastalopportunities.org | Knox County

Commonsense Housing | www.commonsensehousing.org | Penobscot County

Community Living Association | clamaine.org/ | Aroostook County, Penobscot County, Washington County

Creative Options | www.creativeoptionsllc.org | Statewide

Creative Trails/Support Solutions | www.supportsolutions.org | Cumberland County, York County

Creative Works | www.creativeworksystems.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Kennebec County, York County

Day One | www.day-one.org | Residential services are State wide, Outpatient services are within York, Cumberland, Oxford and Androscoggin counties

Downeast Horizons | www.dehi.org | Hancock County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County, Somerset County

GMS | www.gmsme.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Franklin County, Hancock County, Kennebec County, Knox County, Lincoln County, Oxford County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County, Sagadahoc County, Somerset County, Waldo County, York County

Gallant Therapy Services | www.gallanttherapyservices.com | Androscoggin County, Kennebec County, Piscataquis County, Sagadahoc County, Somerset County

Happy Haven | <https://happyhaven.llc/> | Androscoggin County

Hope Association | hopeassociation.org/ | Androscoggin County, Franklin County, Oxford County

Independence Association | www.independenceassociation.org/ | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Kennebec County, Sagadahoc County

Independence Advocates of Maine | www.iamsupports.org | Aroostook County, Hancock County, Knox County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County, Waldo County, Washington County

Jmpb inc. Dba Assistance Plus | www.assistanceplus.com | Androscoggin County, Franklin County, Kennebec County, Knox County, Lincoln County, Oxford County, Penobscot County, Sagadahoc County, Somerset County, Waldo County

John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. | www.jfmh.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Franklin County, Kennebec County, Sagadahoc County, York County

LEAP, Inc. | www.leapcommunity.org | Androscoggin County, Franklin County, Kennebec County, Oxford County, Somerset County

Living Innovations | www.livinginnovations.com | Statewide

Maine Vocational and Rehabilitation Associates | mainevocandrehab.com/index.html | Cumberland County, Kennebec County, Knox County, Penobscot County

Milestone Recovery | www.milestone-recovery.org | Statewide

Mobius, Inc. | www.mobiusinc.org | Cumberland County, Kennebec County, Knox County, Lincoln County, Sagadahoc County, Waldo County

Morrison Center | www.morrison-maine.org | Statewide

NeuroRestorative-Maine | www.sevitahealth.com | Cumberland County, York County

North Country Associates, Inc. | northcountryassociates.com/ | Statewide

Northern Aroostook Alternatives, Inc. | www.northernarostookalternatives.com | Aroostook County

OHI | www.ohimaine.org | Hancock County, Penobscot County, Waldo County, Washington County

Penquis | www.penquis.org | Knox County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County

Personal Onsite Development | www.facebook.com/PODMaine/ | Androscoggin County

Pines Senior Communities, The | www.thepinescommunity.org | York County

Port Resources | www.portresources.org | Cumberland County, York County

Progress Center, The, Inc. | www.progresscentermaine.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Oxford County

PSL Services STRIVE | www.pslstrive.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, York County

SeniorsPlus | www.seniorsplus.org | Statewide

SKILLS, Inc. | www.skillsinc.net | Somerset, Kennebec, Penobscot

Spurwink | www.spurwink.org | Statewide

UCP of Maine | www.ucpofmaine.org | Kennebec County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County, Somerset County, Waldo County

Uplift, Inc. | www.upliftmaine.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, Franklin County, Kennebec County, Knox County, Lincoln County, Oxford County, Sagadahoc County, Somerset County, Waldo County

Wellspring | <https://wellspringmaine.com/> | Statewide

Woodfords Family Services | www.woodfords.org | Androscoggin County, Cumberland County

Associations, Research Institutions, Advocates, and Others - 13 entities and individuals with subject area expertise serving the entire State of Maine and individuals impacted by the workforce shortage

3i Housing of Maine | www.3iHome.org | Statewide

Alliance for Addiction & Mental Health Services, Maine | <https://thealliancemaine.org/> | Statewide

Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter | www.alz.org | Statewide

Direct Care and Support Professional Advisory Council | <https://www.mainedirectcarepros.org/> | Statewide

Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine | homecarealliance.org | Statewide

LeadingAge ME NH | www.leadingagemenh.org | Statewide

Maine Association for Community Service Providers (MACSP) | www.meacsp.org | Statewide

Maine Association of Nonprofits | www.nonprofitmaine.org | Statewide

Maine Center for Economic Policy | www.mecep.org | Statewide

Maine Council on Aging | www.maineCouncilonaging.org | Statewide

Maine Health Care Association | www.mehca.org | Statewide

Maine Long Term Care Ombudsman Program | www.maineombudsman.org | Statewide

PHI | www.phinational.org | Nationwide