



**Written Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging
To Committee on Health and Human Services**

**In Favor of LD 1548 - Resolve, To Promote Quality and
Transparency in the Provision of Services by Assisted
Housing Programs that Provide Memory Care**

Delivered in writing on April 29, 2019

Greetings Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jess Maurer and I'm the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of more than 80 organizations, businesses, municipalities and older Mainers working together to make sure we all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age in our homes and communities. I am providing testimony in favor of LD 1548.

While nearly all of us agree that we want to age in our homes with dignity, choice and opportunity to access the kinds of person-centered supports and care we need, the reality is that some of us will not succeed in this goal. Some of us will need to receive care in a community care setting, especially those of us with late-stage dementia. When entering a facility to gain access to the care we need, we should not lose our right to dignity and person-centered care, even if we ourselves cannot convey our personal wishes. Those who administer these facilities and provide care to people living with dementia agree entirely with these beliefs and work diligently to build systems of care that embody them.

Unfortunately, the reality of our present situation in Maine challenges the ability of workers who provide care to give the kind of person-centered care we all agree we should all receive. Specifically, Maine's general worker shortage coupled with an historical undervaluation of direct care workers is making it very difficult for Maine's assisted living communities to attract and retain qualified workers. While direct care workers in assisted living communities should be taking all the time they need to cue and care for residents with dementia in a person-centered way, consistently tight-staffed working environments mean staff must sometimes rush through duties to ensure everyone receives basic care.

It takes time to provide high quality care to people living with dementia. In order to ensure high quality care is provided, Maine needs to accurately set reimbursement rates at a level consistent with the time it actually takes to provide person-centered dementia care. This bill directs the Department to conduct a comprehensive time study and to take other necessary steps to establish a quality system of care for people living with dementia who are living in assisted living communities. These steps will lead to appropriate reimbursement for quality care and increased training and oversight for paid care providers.

We urge your vote in favor of LD 1548. Thank you.

Board Chair: Mary Jane Richards, COO North Country Associates
Vice Chair Don Harden, Director of Adult Services/Catholic Charities Maine
Treasurer: Betsy Sawyer-Manter/Seniors Plus
Secretary: Marilyn Gugliucci, Director/Geriatrics Education and Research, UNE