



LD 967: An Act to Ensure Access to Community Services for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism #ensureaccess2community

About Section 21, 29, and Direct Care Professionals

- Section 21 and Section 29 of the MaineCare Benefits Manual represent Maine's Home and Community Based Services for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism. The purpose of these services is to give people the support they need to live in their own home or in another home in the community thus avoiding expensive and unnecessary institutional services.
- Direct Care Professionals (DSPs) are the people who provide those supports. Direct supports are a range of activities that contribute to the health and wellbeing of the individual and his or her ability to live in and be part of the community. This includes everything from physical assistance with eating and mobility to teaching and modeling self-care and self-management skills. DSPs have individualized relationships with the people they support and ensure their safety and care in the community.

Workforce Crisis

- In 2007, rates for Section 21 and 29 were set by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). That rate set aside \$10.37/hr for DSPs. Since then, the rate has been cut multiple times, leaving pennies above minimum wage set for DSPs. There have been no increases or adjustments for cost of living, inflation, and rising health insurance costs.
- As a result, DSPs can find comparable compensation working entry level retail positions. Many DSPs struggle to make ends meet and are leaving positions they love to support their families.
- Due to the high turnover and vacancy rates, agencies are unable to adequately staff the services they offer resulting in less services and less choice for recipients.

About the Legislation

- Seeks to cure the workforce crisis and compensate DSPs adequately for the work they do.
- Dials back the rate to where it was set in 2007 and directs DHHS to make a new rate that is adjusted for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index and Department of Labor standards.
- Provides a mechanism to adjust the rate annually going forward.

Impact Statements

- People with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism need and deserve consistent and stable support and care. It's our responsibility, all of us, to make sure they are safe from harm and part of our community.
- No one expects a business to operate on 2007 revenue and 2017 expenses, but this is what community supports are asked to do every day.
- We employ over 12,000 DSPs across every corner of the State. These workers put money back into the local community and support people with disabilities to participate just as fully in Maine's economy.