



## **The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LD 84**

### **“Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services To Allow Spouses To Provide Home and Community-based Services to Eligible MaineCare Members”**

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Adam Crepeau. I serve as the policy analyst for The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of LD 84, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services To Allow Spouses To Provide Home and Community-based Services to Eligible MaineCare Members.”

Mainers who utilize the state’s home and community benefits for the elderly and adults with disabilities may hire a family member as their personal support specialist. However, federal and subsequently state rules prevent the spouses of Medicaid recipients from delivering or receiving payment for services as a personal support specialist. For individuals who use these services, their spouse is often considered their natural caregiver and would be the natural choice to provide these services.

It is necessary for Maine to allow spouses to be the paid personal support specialists for their loved ones. Despite their inability to be officially hired as a caregiver under the current rules, spouses of recipients of this service still spend a significant amount of time and resources caring for their loved ones. Some spouses are forced to quit their jobs to care for their husband or wife around the clock, or whenever the current caregiver is absent from the home. They do this without receiving payment. In addition, their workload around the home doubles when their husband or wife becomes physically unable to contribute.

This is incredibly taxing for Maine families and puts them under great economic, physical, and emotional stress. Further, this backwards system actually advocates for couples to get divorced, as this is the only way a spouse could receive payment for the care they provide.

There is minimal fiscal impact to enact this change, and its passage could actually reduce future expenditures by DHHS. These programs provide care for Mainers in their own homes and communities. This prevents vulnerable Mainers from needing services at long-term care facilities, which are far more costly to state taxpayers than allowing a spouse to be paid for the care they regularly provide to their loved one.

A 2011 study funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services concludes there is “no financial disadvantage to Medicaid and some quality and cost advantages (particularly the much lower rate of preventable hospital stays among elderly in-home supportive service recipients) from allowing spouses to be paid providers.”<sup>1</sup> Further, the report advocates for “honoring recipient and family preferences for paid spouse providers.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3530315/>

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THE MAINE HERITAGE POLICY CENTER

As of April 2018, at least ten states allow spouses to receive payment for providing primary care attendant services under a state Medicaid program and four through a non-Medicaid program.<sup>2</sup>

We urge the Committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on this resolve in order to help the state’s most vulnerable citizens and to save money for taxpayers. Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/longtermcare/paying-spousal-caregivers.html>