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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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# CEO testifies at budget hearing

## Calls for greater reimbursement for Direct Support Professionals

**EAGLE LAKE, Maine (Jan. 26, 2021)** - Northern Maine General CEO Michelle Raymond joined other members of the Maine Association of Community Support Providers in calling for an increase in wages for Direct Support Professionals during a Maine Legislature Supplemental Budget Hearing that started at 10 a.m. Other organizations also participated.

Raymond made a passionate plea to stabilize the Direct Support Professionals workforce in Maine. The MaineCare reimbursement rate's formula includes \$11.21 per hour for DSPs, frontline workers who support Individuals with Developmental Disabilities. This, at a time when minimum wage is \$12.15 in Maine. This, during an ongoing pandemic.

"We have *certified* (DSPs) who have worked for 20- or 30-plus years, *struggling* to make ends meet, and looking at alternatives - not because they don't want to do this work, but because they can no longer afford to," she said. "In order for us to keep supporting the vulnerable individuals in need, the needs of those doing the supporting have to be met."

Raymond spoke virtually, through Zoom, to members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health And Human Services committees. Before them is "An Act Making Certain Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government."

"This (IDD) program cannot survive any more cuts, and we can't keep swimming against the current," she said, on behalf of not only DSPs but also those served by DSPs.

Raymond said that it is "imperative" that the DSP workforce receive "short-term, immediate financial relief" to carry them through the end of the year.

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Rep. John L. Martin, D-Eagle Lake, who serves on the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, listened to the testimony.

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*Employing 170 people, Northern Maine General is a nonprofit social services organization serving Aroostook County, with business offices in Eagle Lake and Caribou. Founded in 1907, NMG provides long-term care, rehabilitation, home and community supports, behavioral health services, case management, and consultation services and resources. Contracted services include subsidized apartments.*