

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# ESSENTIAL CARE WORKFORCE

Advisory Committee Report—LD 898  
February 2023

*Submitted by  
Maine Department of Labor*

**MAINE**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR**

## Overview

The Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee (ESWAC) ([bill language](#)), as established in Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 54-E is established to advise the Legislature, the Governor and state agencies on the State's shortage of essential support workers. The advisory committee consists of 14 appointed members. The bill provides funding for a part-time labor program specialist position at the Maine Department of Labor which will be staffed by Catalina Piedrahita. The work of this committee may support the [Commission to Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues](#) which is scheduled to issue recommendations annually until 2026.

## Establishment of the Committee:

The advisory committee consists of 14 members each member was appointed and invited to the first meeting including:

- a. Senator Joe Baldacci is representing the Senate and was appointed by the President of the Senate.
- b. Representative Margaret Craven is representing the House of Representatives, and was appointed by the Speaker of the House
- c. Abby Stivers is the designee for the Commissioner of Health and Human Services
- d. Angelina Klouthis Jean is the designee for the Commissioner of Labor.
- e. Catherine Thibodeau from I Am Supports is representing an organization providing services to persons with intellectual disabilities and autism who is a member of a statewide association of providers of services to persons with intellectual disabilities and autism, and was appointed by the President of the Senate
- f. Mary Jane Richards from North County Associates is representing a facility-based long-term care provider who is a member of a statewide association of facility-based long-term care providers, and was appointed by the President of the Senate
- g. Betsy Sawyer-Manter from Seniors Plus is representing a service coordination agency for people receiving homebased and community-based long-term care, and was appointed by the President of the Senate
- h. Michael Smith from Catholic Charities Maine is representing an organization providing statewide homemaker services through a state-funded, independent, support service program, and was appointed by the President of the Senate
- i. Dan Belyea from the Maine Community College System is representing an institution of higher education engaged in workforce development, and was appointed by the President of the Senate
- j. Gloria Noyes from Westbrook CTE is representing a career and technical education center or region, and was appointed by the Speaker of the House
- k. Tom Newman from Alpha One is representing an organization promoting independent living for persons with disabilities, and was appointed by the Speaker of the House.

- l. Stephanie Capano Hatcher from Northeast Residential Services is an essential support worker, and was appointed by the Speaker of the House
- m. Jess Maurer from the Maine Council on Aging is representing a statewide advocacy association that broadly advocates for people who are entitled to receive essential support worker services, and was appointed by the Speaker of the House
- n. Donald Dufour from Tri County Mental Health Services is representing an organization providing services to persons with behavioral health challenges who is a member of a statewide association of providers of services to persons with behavioral health challenges, and appointed by the Speaker of the House

**Goals:** Examine and monitor staffing levels, make recommendations on recruitment and retention of essential care workers, including benefit cliff pilot project and data collection efforts.

**Timeline:** This committee was established in September 2022. The committee held the first meeting on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and it is required to meet three times a year until January 1, 2028.

**Deliverables:** Beginning January 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the advisory committee shall submit a report to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters and health and human services matters on its activities under this chapter. The Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide updates 3 times a year to the advisory committee regarding their efforts to expand the State's essential support workforce.

## Meeting Summary

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 10:00AM – 11:30AM Hosted virtually in Zoom

### Agenda:

- Introduction of committee members and staff
- Review of duties and powers of Advisory Committee
- Programs Overview
  - Campaigns to promote direct care careers (DOL; DHHS)
  - Tuition remission (DOL; DHHS)
  - Training For ME (DOL; DHHS; DOE; MCCA; UMS)
  - Healthcare career navigators (DOL)
  - Healthcare pre-apprenticeship & apprenticeship (DOL)
  - Benefits Cliff Calculator (DHHS)

- Stackable credentials (DHHS)
- Chair and vice chair election
- Discussion around next steps

## Outcomes:

- Purpose of the ESWAC was established.
- The professions that are considered direct care for the purpose of this work was agreed upon through the statutory definition of “**Essential Support Worker,**” as used in LD 898 (Title 22, section 7401, subsection 3. "Essential support worker" means an individual who by virtue of employment generally provides to individuals direct contact assistance with activities of daily living or instrumental activities of daily living or has direct access to provide care and services to clients, patients or residents regardless of the setting."
- The Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor provided an overview of ongoing efforts including:
  - The Live and work in Maine campaign, focused on attracting healthcare workers to Maine.
  - The Caring for ME campaign to attract Maine workers to home health and community-based service careers.
  - Healthcare Training for ME collaboration with University of Maine system, Maine Community College system, Adult Education to provide training opportunities for employers and incumbent workers to upskill in their careers. As a part of Healthcare Training for ME, MDOL offers Tuition Remission with funding from the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan to provide training for healthcare workers interested in advancing in their careers
  - Healthcare Navigators connect individuals interested in healthcare pathways to training and employment opportunities.
  - [Healthcare workforce](#) apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship programs funded by the Maine Jobs recovery plan are currently offering Certified Nursing Assistant, Direct Support Professional, Personal Support Specialist, and others, including opportunities at Northern Light Health, Maine Health, Northeastern Residential Services. More employers have become sponsors of apprentices, like Redington Fairview General Hospital, Central Maine Healthcare, St. Mary's hospital and Genesis, and will be offering EMT, CNA, PSS/CRMA and CCMA opportunities.
  - Benefits Cliff Calculator helps individuals and policy makers understand barriers for families and figure out solutions.
  - Stackable credentials making it portable for serving populations, making sure people get knowledge and experience in their careers, that the training is successful for them, and they have the support for continued success.
  - Maine Care reimbursement and additional workforce initiatives that are happening and will be shared in future meetings.
- Metrics to assess the progress of current initiatives will be addressed in future meetings.
- The ESWAC elected Jess Mauer from the Council on Aging as chair, and Catherine Thibodeau from I Am Supports as vice-chair.

- The ESWAC anticipates the release of the second annual report, “Efforts and Progress in Implementing the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues, pursuant to PI.2021, c. 398, Section AAAA-7” on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, to further inform future agendas.

**Work Plan:**

- The ESWAC will meet 3 times per year.
- The Department of Labor will provide detail around program outcomes evaluation and the perception from employers and individuals.
- The Department of Health and Human Services will provide more data about workforce retention.
- Chair and vice chair will work with staff to set the agenda for upcoming meetings.
- The committee attendants will be provided contact information for further engagement.

