



February 5, 2025

Honorable Chairman Rochefort
NH Senate Health & Human Service Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 244

Thank you Chair and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Krysten Evans, and I serve as the Director of Policy for ABLE NH, a disability justice organization dedicated to protecting the civil and human rights of people with disabilities across New Hampshire.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB 244, a bill that will expand access to primary health care services, increase the number of direct health care providers, and raise Medicaid reimbursement rates in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire faces a severe shortage of healthcare providers, particularly those who accept Medicaid. A 2023 report from the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute found that low Medicaid reimbursement rates are a leading factor in provider shortages, as many practices cannot afford to serve Medicaid patients at current rates (NHFPI, 2023). This crisis is particularly devastating for people with disabilities, who make up a significant portion of the state's Medicaid population and often require specialized care.

For individuals with disabilities, access to health care is essential to maintaining their health, independence, and overall well-being. People with disabilities experience higher rates of chronic illness and require routine specialty care (CDC, 2023). When Medicaid reimbursement rates are too low, doctors and specialists limit or stop accepting Medicaid patients, leaving people with disabilities with fewer options for care. The result is worsening health outcomes and increased strain on emergency services.

SB 244 also addresses a long-standing crisis in the Medicaid-funded home and community-based services (HCBS) system. Medicaid provides essential services that allow people with disabilities to receive support in their homes and communities, but these services are chronically underfunded. Direct support professionals, who provide

assistance with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, and preparing meals, are leaving the field at alarming rates due to unsustainable wages. According to PHI National, New Hampshire's direct care workforce experiences turnover rates exceeding 50 percent annually, leaving individuals with disabilities without the support they need to live safely and independently (PHI, 2023). Without higher Medicaid reimbursement rates, provider agencies cannot pay competitive wages, further exacerbating the workforce crisis and leaving many families struggling to find reliable care.

This bill is about ensuring that Medicaid functions as a true safety net. New Hampshire's Medicaid reimbursement rates currently average only 52 percent of what Medicare pays for the same services, among the lowest in the country (KFF, 2023). This gap makes it financially unsustainable for many providers to serve Medicaid patients, leaving individuals with disabilities without access to the care and support they need to thrive.

SB 244 is an investment in the health, independence, and dignity of New Hampshire residents with disabilities. By increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, this bill will help keep providers in the system, stabilize the direct care workforce, and prevent further erosion of essential health services.

I urge this committee to support SB 244 and take bold action to ensure that people with disabilities in New Hampshire have access to the health care and support services they need to live full and independent lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,



Krysten Evans

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Sources:

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