



## **From the Desk of the Executive Director Jessica Hines**

As Hope Association moves into 2026, I want to take a moment to speak directly to our staff, families, board members, and community partners about the changing landscape we are navigating together and to recognize the extraordinary work that continues to happen within our organization, every single day.

The regulatory environment for organizations serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities continues to evolve. In Maine, we are seeing ongoing refinements to licensing standards under MaineCare and DHHS oversight, particularly under rules such as 10-144 CMR Chapter 108 and the federal HCBS (Home and Community-Based Services) Settings Rule.

These changes reflect a noble, broader national movement toward ensuring that all people receiving services are afforded opportunity, autonomy, privacy, dignity, safety, purpose, and access to a meaningful community life. These changes make the expectations clearer than ever and demand that policies, documentation, and the daily practices of agencies like ours align with the standards.

That means agencies, like ours, are constantly reviewing policies, adjusting procedures, strengthening documentation practices, and ensuring our culture reflects not just compliance, but commitment and compassion. Because, beyond compliance to regulatory and licensing standards, at the end of the day, at the heart of it all, our work is profoundly human.

Every day across our programs, support staff are helping someone try a new activity, learn a new skill, rebuild confidence after a setback, or simply feel connected, seen, and valued.

They are advocating in medical appointments. They are coaching self-care, budgeting, cooking, employment skills, and more. They are supporting people through difficult moments with patience and empathy. They are sitting quietly beside someone who has experienced loss. They are cheer-leading people towards their goals. They are connecting people to resources. They are supporting friendships and family connection. They are singing, dancing, gardening, crafting, creating, learning, growing, laughing, crying, and adventuring, even, alongside the people who choose them for services.

This is not just “direct care.” It is relationship-based support. It is trust-building. It is showing up, consistently, in ways that allow people to live full, self-directed lives.

I see the early morning shift change communications.

I see the late-night reassurance when someone is anxious.

I see the community connections.

I see the creative problem-solving when staffing is tight.

I see the celebrations of wins, big and small.

I see the passion for the work we do across programs, across departments, across roles.

These moments do not \*always\* show up in audits or reports, but they define who we are, just the same, and make me proud to be affiliated

The year ahead will continue to bring change. Our understanding of new regulations will shift, expectations will evolve, and we will adapt, as we always have.

What will not change is our commitment to:

- Respecting, honoring, and advocating for the rights, dignity, and autonomy of every individual supported by our mission, and..
- Strengthening our culture of professionalism and compassion.

To our teams: thank you for your professionalism and heart.

To the people we support and their friends and families: thank you for your trust.

To our board and community partners: thank you for your steady support.

With gratitude and resolve,

Jessica Hines

Executive Director

Hope Association