



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

December 19, 2023

Testimony Neither For Nor Against "An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program

Senator Jackson, Representative Talbot-Ross, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs Services:

My name is Nancy Cronin, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council. *Councils on Developmental Disabilities were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) in 1970. Maine's DD Council has been advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities for nearly 50 years. The DD Council is a federally funded, independent organization with members from across the state, including persons with disabilities, family members, and representatives of public and private agencies which provide services and/or funding for services for individuals with developmental disabilities. As required in federal law, we are involved in advocacy, capacity building and systemic change activities, with the goal that individuals with developmental and other disabilities of all ages are fully included, integrated and involved in their communities and the decisions impacting their lives.*

Please accept this testimony in Neither for Nor Against LD 3.

MDDC is not opposed to assisting Maine residents with heating relief, but, we are opposed that close to 35 million dollars of the initiative is to be paid for by money originally allocated to adult Developmental Disability Home and Community Based Waiver Services. This Committee will hear about how many people with Developmental Disabilities in Maine are struggling sitting on waitlists for services or struggling with only part of the services available. You will also likely hear about the staffing crises due, in part, by low wages


It is possible that this re-allocation of dollars is thought to be one-time COVID money that needs to be spent on one-time endeavors. If that is the case MDDC agrees that creates some limitations on what the money can be used for. MDDC would prefer, however, to take this investment and improve the system of care.

Maine was one of the last in the nation to begin implementing the Home and Community Based Settings rule. We are still late to the game on coming into compliance and ensuring that people with DD have what they need to live in the community. Perhaps that is where this 35 million dollars should be going. MDDC is concerned that the appropriation committee will learn that more money is needed to improve this system. We must not "beg from Peter to pay Paul." MDDC is not opposed to heating relief but is opposed to paying for it by removing money ear-marked for people with Developmental Disabilities.

MDDC recently published www.shadowsofpineland.org which records the history of DD in Maine including the period of institutionalization in Pineland. A social media campaign publicizing the website was run stating "We Can't Go Back." Thousands of Mainers recently visited the website and commented agreement. But there was a great deal of concern that things for people with developmental disabilities are poor because.

MDDC asks you to hold Maine accountable to the promise of Home and Community Based Services.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "John" followed by a stylized surname.