



March 27, 2023

Senator Joe Baldacci, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
Cross Office Building, Room 209  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: *LD 659, An Act to Promote Seamless and Flexible Home and Community Supports Across the Lifespan for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities or Autism*

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Standing Members of the Committee On Health and Human Services:

My name is Staci Converse and I am a Managing Attorney at Disability Rights Maine (DRM). DRM is Maine's designated Protection and Advocacy Agency and our mission is to advance justice and equality by enforcing rights and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities in Maine. We write in strong support of LD 659, "An Act to Promote Seamless and Flexible Home and Community Supports Across the Lifespan for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities or Autism."

The modernization of the service delivery system called for in the Lifespan Waiver is long overdue, and it will have a significant positive impact on the lives of the people we serve. As a society, we have an obligation to support and empower all individuals, including those with developmental disabilities, to lead independent and fulfilling lives, and the changes proposed in this bill reflect these values.

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The current system is outdated and broken, and too often, adults with developmental disability labels are invisible. Right now, many people with developmental disabilities are segregated into group homes and community support programs where they live highly controlled lives and have little meaningful interaction with people outside these institutions. Opportunities for employment are both rarely encouraged and extremely limited.

That is why Maine needs the Lifespan Waiver. This waiver focuses on independence and lays out a vision for how to support people to get jobs. The Lifespan Waiver would also expand the availability of self-directed services for people. Self-directed services provide individuals with developmental disabilities greater control over their lives, allowing them to make decisions about how they want to live, work, and pursue their goals. This approach empowers individuals to live more independently and with dignity, which is essential for their well-being. Self-directed services would also help alleviate some of the staffing issues that have long-plagued providers delivering services in congregate settings.

OADS has already convened a stakeholder group to develop the Lifespan Waiver, and it is currently meeting to brainstorm ideas about what services should be included in the waiver. The group includes a diverse range of perspectives, including individuals who receive services, family members, advocates, DRM, OADS staff, and service providers. This broad range of opinions ensures that all voices are represented and that the final policy recommendations are inclusive and reflective of the needs and wants of all stakeholders. Although the stakeholder group is currently in the brainstorming stage, I am impressed by the quality and quantity of ideas being discussed. The group is taking a collaborative approach, sharing experiences, challenges, and solutions, and seeking common ground. This approach is essential to creating effective and sustainable policy reform that can lead to positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

Because the Lifespan Waiver will improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities by providing them with greater choice, independence, and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives we urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Staci" followed by a long, horizontal, sweeping flourish.

Staci Converse  
Managing Attorney