

Testimony in Support of LD 473 – Resolve, to Expand the Eligibility for and Increase the Number of Hours of Applied Behavior Analysis Services Authorized by the MaineCare Program.

Health and Human Services Committee

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Good morning Members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Cheri Hurst, and I am a resident of Brunswick.

I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and the retired Director of Behavioral Services at Independence Association in Brunswick.

I am testifying in support of LD 473: Resolve, to Expand the Eligibility for and Increase the Number of Hours of Applied Behavior Analysis Services Authorized by the MaineCare Program.

At Independence Association we serve a number of people who engage in assorted Challenging Behaviors: the individual who has put his head through multiple car windshields/windows; the person who has injured the driver of a vehicle and then attempted to exit the vehicle while traveling on the highway; the person who aims for sharp surfaces on which to bang his head; the person who has aggressed on others to the point of breaking bones and causing concussions; the individual who has not only engaged in smearing feces on herself and her surroundings but has also ingested her feces; the person who has thrown pieces of furniture through windows and punched multiple holes in the walls.

To serve these individuals, as a BCBA delivering Applied Behavior Analysis services I have been tasked with: determining what function a particular behavior might be serving this person; developing skill acquisition goals to teach new skills for the person to be able to meet this function in a way that does not hurt himself or others; developing environmental modifications to support more constructive behaviors; developing data collection systems to document progress; monitoring and adjusting the plans as needed; meeting state behavioral regulation requirements for documentation and oversight of plans; training staff how to carry out all of the above. The billable maximum of 16.5 hours per year for a behavioral consult is quickly exhausted. By contrast, in Children's Services, BCBA authorization is for 139 hours. Neither the number of allowable hours, nor the scope of covered services for adults is anywhere near adequate to provide the services necessary to provide effective treatment.

At this time, there are over 2000 individuals on the waiting list to be served, many of whom have complex behavioral needs. Many agencies who would like to accept and serve these individuals are not able to because of the lack of sufficient funding to cover the ABA services needed to provide safe and effective treatment for them.

I request the legislature consider approval of LD 473. Thank you.

Sincerely,
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