



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

March 29, 2023

Testimony in Support of LD 1003, An Act to Increase Access to Behavioral Health Services for Children and Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism.

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Nancy Cronin, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council.¹ The Council mostly supports this bill. We agree that people with Developmental Disabilities (DD) should never be stuck in emergency departments. We also agree that current crisis system is not meeting the needs. We hear regularly about families urged to call crisis only for those services to not be available, quickly, in the area. If crisis responders cannot respond rapidly to an urgent situation, what is the point? Given that, we strongly support the idea of a more robust mobile crisis unit.

In addition, MDCC requests that language is added to the bill that requires responders of crises to have the requirement of ongoing training and technical assistance regarding communication and de-escalation methods specifically for people with DD, especially people with DD who have minimal verbal language. Too often we hear about crisis responders utilizing talking techniques

¹ 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 with and for individuals with developmental disabilities for over 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.

with the intent to deescalate. These can be highly ineffective for some people with DD, in fact it can make the situation worse.

MDDC struggled with whether to support this bill or testify neither for nor against. We decided to support this bill, at this time, because of how broken our system seems to be. So many children are on waitlists not getting the treatment that they need. This is pushing these children and families into crises. For some adults, lack of services is also the problem driving the increased need for crisis services. It is access to needed services that is driving the emergency. MDDC is concerned that when the solution to an access problem is creating more crisis beds, then while the beds may be filled, the real problem will not be addressed. This just creates additional crises.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

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