

James Collins
Independence Association
LD 473

I am James Collins, Director of Shared Living for Independence Association in Brunswick. We are a non-profit organization that has supported people with Intellectual Disabilities for over 55 years. I am submitting written testimony supporting RE: LD 473: Resolve, to Expand the Eligibility for and Increase the Number of Hours of Applied Behavior Analysis Services Authorized by the MaineCare Program.

Applied Behavior Analysis is an evidence-based, and proven approach to reduce or eliminate harmful behaviors for individuals with complex behavioral challenges. I request the hours be amended to reflect a minimum of 120 per year and be extended to individuals on Section 29. 16.5 hours is not enough time for Section 21 clients to receive proper attention for this service. The fact that Section 29 does not have any hours for this service is insulting and unfortunate.

Children who have received this service their whole life become adults and then only receive a fraction of the service which is extremely lopsided and unfair. Section 28 currently allows a minimum of 120 hours and up to 136 to address the complex behavioral needs of children with intellectual disabilities and autism. Their needs do not go away when they turn 18, if anything they are more necessary to address with the maturity of the person. Independence Association has always put the clients first when it comes to ABA services and IA has invested their own money (More than the allotted 16 hrs.) into having this department staffed and available for them.

The reason Maine's behavior management plans do not show progress and appear to continue indefinitely is because they are not authored or managed by a BCBA, and BCBA's do not want to identify with a service that they know ethically cannot be addressed within 16.5 hours.

As a result, providers dump these individuals into hospital emergency rooms, where they often get sent out of state because we do not have the capacity to serve them here. Many of them go to Florida, where the organization I led, works with people using an ABA approach.

Thank you,
James Collins