

Rebecca Hill
Independence Association
LD 473

Hello, I am Rebecca Hill, Community Case Manager with Independence Association in Brunswick. We are a non-profit organization that has supported people with Intellectual Disabilities since 1966. 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.

Maine currently uses no clinical approach to support adults with complex behavioral needs. Aside from Dr. Le'Ann Millender, Maine has no clinical practitioners on their behavior plan review teams. The answer to any individual with a complex behavioral need is to authorize additional staffing. This does not work to fix the behavioral issues, and sometimes makes the behaviors worse.

I work with several individuals who, without behavioral plans in place, would not have the quality of life they do now. One of my clients, a young female, struggled to have staff in her residential group home, due to severe aggression towards others. When extra staff were added, it only made her more upset and she would triangulate the staff, attacking one as the other would attempt to assist. With much work on the part of BCBA's (she's had a number of changes due to many providers giving up due to lack of time and reimbursement) and extra trainings for the staff, she has made huge strides in not only her behaviors but in her day to day abilities. It took years to develop the right plan for her. Many months were wasted because of the lack of ABA services available and not enough consultation hours to fully train staff. While she is doing so well today, I often wonder how much sooner she could've been enjoying her life and living with adequately trained staff and a team that understood her behaviors.

Children who have thrived under the ABA services in preschool until the age of 18, fall off a steep cliff when transitioning to adulthood. 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. They are not suddenly "cured" when they are adults, and can benefit from a similar approach in therapy. When you are born with Type I diabetes it does not go away when you reach adulthood. The same insulin needed by a child is needed by adults. 16.5 hours per year is not enough time to develop a Functional Behavioral Analysis, which ironically is not authorized by Section 21, but is required if that person requires a Behavior management plan.

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.

I thank you for allowing me to testify.

Rebecca Hill