

Kathy Rickards
Brunswick
LD 744

Chairpersons Baldacci and Meyers, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Kathy Rickards and I am the parent of a 43-year-old man with medical, intellectual, and mental health diagnoses that require a consistent, well trained workforce to meet the complexity of his daily needs. I am testifying today in support of LD 744: An Act to Ensure Access to Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities by Requiring Rate Studies for Home and Community-based Services.

My son was born with life threatening complications that required about three years of care in the Infant Intensive Care Unit at Maine Medical Center. The first three years of life are a critical time for developing a sense of trust and emotional safety. All my son's energies were spent surviving the daily challenge of living, and he has struggled all his life with a constant need to connect emotionally with the people around him. His journey is not unique. Many of his peers with disabilities also spent their first few years dealing with catastrophic illness, and as a result, rely on consistency and routine to function in a life that often seems unpredictable.

Your support of LD 744 will help address the understaffing and turnover rate that severely limits my son's life. Not knowing in the morning who will help bathe and feed him is contributing to a sense of failure on his part. Inadequately trained staff put him at risk for death should they innocently give him a drink when he asks without putting Thick-it in it, as he cannot drink unthickened liquids without aspirating. He is realizing that his DSP's leave in record numbers and he tries to protect himself by not investing in a relationship. His heart has been broken too many times. You have a responsibility to require a rate study that will ensure a competitive wage is paid to attract and retain a quality workforce. Your Maine constituents deserve no less.