

March 18, 2025
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 769 “An Act Regarding Access to Behavior Health Supports for Adults with Certain Disabilities”

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Brian Harnish and I live in Orono, Maine. I am writing in support of LD769, An Act Regarding Access to Behavioral Health Supports for Adults with Disabilities.

I am an adult living with Spina Bifida and thriving in my community. I currently serve on the board of directors of Speaking Up for Us and have worked both at the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion & Disability Studies as well as Disability Rights Maine.

The use of restraints and seclusion, as it relates to people with disabilities, must stop. For too many years, organizations that work with people with disabilities could (and continue to be able to) restrain and forcibly seclude them based on behavior that is not a clear and present danger to themselves or others.

As a person with a disability, I do not feel comfortable being a part of an organization where restraints & seclusion are used as a regular practice, nor do I feel comfortable using services where it could potentially be happening. Ever since I started hearing about these practices, I question whether the service providers I use adhere to these practices.

While I have never had restraints used on me, I would be horrified to see it happening to someone else and without question would have to say or do something about it.

I feel that the use of restraints is potentially harmful to the person doing the restraining as well as the person being restrained. It could go very bad for all parties involved, very fast and lead to other more significant issues.

I was fortunate enough to be brought up in an environment where I was urged to speak up for myself and others, and to be able to help others to do the same. I would like you to make these kinds of restraint & seclusion practices stop so that others can have the opportunity to have the same opportunities I have in our Maine communities.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Brian Harnish

Orono, ME

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