

March 18, 2025

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

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

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

My name is Georgia West and I am a self-advocate on the board of Speaking Up For Us. I live in Presque Isle, ME.

I am writing in support of LD 769 because I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in behavioral health settings. My son, who has ADHD, autism, bipolar disorder, depression, and schizophrenia, has struggled greatly. During his time at KidsPeace, I saw how difficult it was to manage his agitation. In one instance, it took a city police officer and two border patrol agents to help calm him down.

I have heard troubling stories about the use of restraints, including individuals being tied down with blankets or other means. While I understand the need for safety, I believe there are more compassionate ways to de-escalate a situation. I have seen firsthand how a simple, firm hug—like the kind my caseworker gave my son—can help without causing harm. Communication, patience, and respect should be prioritized over physical restraints.

Additionally, I once visited a nursing home where a woman was tied to a chair. This deeply disturbed me. Rather than restraining individuals in such a way, I urge caregivers and professionals to find alternative approaches—gentle interventions, calm reassurance, or even something as simple as offering a stuffed animal for comfort.

I strongly believe that LD 769 is necessary to ensure that adults with disabilities receive the compassionate and respectful care they deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Georgia West

Presque Isle, ME

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