



April 4, 2025

Senator Anne Beebe-Center, Chair
Representative Tavis Hasenfus, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
State House, Room 436
Augusta, Maine 04333

*Re: LD 496, An Act Regarding the Time Frame for Issuing a Silver Alert and to
Require Silver Alerts for All Persons Missing from Certain Inpatient Facilities*

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Members Joint Standing
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Sara Squires and I am the Public Policy Director for Disability Rights Maine (DRM), Maine's designated protection and advocacy agency for people with disabilities. On behalf of DRM and the individuals we serve, I am submitting this testimony in opposition to LD 496, which would require the issuance of a Silver Alert for any individual who resides in a group home and is reported missing.

As currently written, Maine's Silver Alert program defines missing and endangered persons as "a person who is believed to be in danger because of the person's age, mental or physical health or intellectual or developmental disability, because of environmental or weather conditions or because the person is missing in dangerous, unexplained, involuntary or suspicious circumstances as determined by a local law enforcement agency."¹ In light of the statutory definition of missing and endangered persons, DRM believes LD 496 unnecessarily expands the Silver Alert in such a way that will infringe on the rights of individuals with disabilities simply because of where they live. To be clear, the mere presence of a disability does not make an individual vulnerable. Similarly, people with disabilities who reside in group homes are not categorically impaired or found to be incompetent.

¹ MRS Title 25, §2201, <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/25/title25sec2201.html>

Further, across multiple service systems, including those for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, psychiatric labels, and brain injuries, there are hundreds of group homes across Maine. Many of these are home to multiple residents; therefore, thousands of individuals with disabilities would be subject a potential silver alert.

Individuals living in group homes are not bound to their residence. They retain the right to come and go freely and are not required to report their whereabouts to staff. Mandating a Silver Alert to be issued whenever an individual leaves home and is subjectively determined missing will overwhelm the system. It risks diverting resources that could otherwise be focused on ensuring that individuals who are truly missing and endangered are identified, located, and able to return home.

For the foregoing reasons, DRM opposes LD 496, which would infringe on the rights of individuals with disabilities who reside in group homes. enable Maine to explore ways to improve transportation to individuals with disabilities who receive Home- and Community-Based Services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara R. Squires", with a stylized circular flourish at the end.

Sara R. Squires
Public Policy Director