



May 9, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Committee on Health and Human Services
Cross Office Building, Room 209
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: *LD 1843 An Act to Provide Peer Respite for Individuals with Mental Health Care Needs.*

Dear Senator Ingerswen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Mark Joyce and I am a managing attorney at Disability Rights Maine (DRM) Maine's designated protection and advocacy agency for individuals with disabilities. We appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 1843 *An Act to Provide Peer Respite for Individuals with Mental Health Care Needs* and to acknowledge the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM) for bringing this proposal forward for consideration.

As established in statute, CCSM plays a vital role in Maine's behavioral health system by ensuring an independent and effective consumer voice in the development of policy and resource allocation. Their advocacy on behalf of this initiative reflects a deep understanding of the needs of people who use Maine's mental health services, as well as the gaps that persist in the current crisis response system.

Peer respite is a voluntary, non-clinical, community-based support model grounded in mutuality, lived experience, and respect. It provides individuals experiencing mental health challenges with an alternative to emergency interventions, emphasizing peer support, self-determination, and personal agency. This type of service aligns with DRM's commitment to advancing recovery-oriented systems of care that honor autonomy and uphold the rights of individuals.

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

We are pleased to express our support for LD 1843 as an important component of a comprehensive and person-centered mental health system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark C. Joyce', is positioned above the printed name.

Mark C. Joyce
Managing Attorney