



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify in support of **LD 1866 “An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding the State-designated Agency Advocating for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness”**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

We cannot underscore the vital role that Disability Rights Maine (DRM) plays in Maine in protecting the rights of individuals both in institutions and in the community that struggle with mental health challenges. This is the time to put them in statute so that if another administration decides to remove their role, it will be a heck of a lot more difficult.

The people that DRM help are often in the most restrictive settings possible for extended periods of time. They have helped people have access to fresh air, sunshine and connections to their community outside. They intervene in situations of improper restraints happen, access to healthcare needed that had gone ignored and access to voting and so much more! They are often the only voice helping patients in rooms full of clinicians when their weight or opinions can easily shadow theirs. They go to shelters, group homes and crisis units to help folks get access to our very complex service system, filling out applications for MaineCare, BRAP housing vouchers and more that have helped our peers move into successful housing and have access to physical and behavioral healthcare.

They come here to this committee and others to help educate on the law and the real-world situations happening on the ground. In a perfect world, we would grow their team! Our peer communities need them! They also bring systemic issues to DHHS and work to fix individual and systemic barriers day in and out.

Can DRM help everyone? No... as stated they are a small and mighty team. For each person who has been able to access basic services or have someone to advocate for harm being done we stand here today to say we NEED them to be our advocates.

Now that the AMHI consent decree is over, now more than ever we need to ensure that advocates continue their vital, crucial work.



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I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1866.

Sincerely,

Simonne M. Moline

Executive Director
