

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Commissioner's Office
11 State House Station
109 Capitol Street
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel: (207) 287-3707; Fax: (207) 287-3005
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Testimony of the Office of Aging and Disability Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human

*In Support of LD 659 An Act to Promote Seamless and Flexible Home and Community Supports
Across the Lifespan for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities or Autism*

Sponsored by: Representative Crockett
Hearing Date: March 20, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Betsy Hopkins, Associate Director at the Office of Aging and Disability services. I am here today to speak in support of LD 659, An Act to Promote Seamless and Flexible Home and Community Supports Across the Lifespan for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) or Autism

This bill establishes the goals for a new MaineCare home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver program for individuals with IDD or autism, the Lifespan program. We believe Lifespan will improve our current system of supports in a number of ways. Our current HCBS waivers enroll only adults, but Lifespan will include individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as early as age 14, enabling smoother and more effective transitions to adulthood. Lifespan services for children will focus on in-home supports, life skills, and employment exploration to prepare individuals for adulthood. As they become adults, Lifespan supports can change without individuals needing to move to a different program. Later in life, supports can change again to address the needs of older adults. Compared to our current Sections 21 and 29 waiver programs, Lifespan will enable supports to change over time within one program as an individual's needs change or the needs of persons who provide support to that individual change. The advantages of Lifespan include:

- Better coordination of information and choices for individuals and families;
- Better transitions, including child to adult, phases of adulthood, and in later life;
- More options for independent living arrangements, where individuals with IDD control their homes;
- Earlier planning for and greater access to competitive integrated employment;
- More robust self-directed service options, building on the limited options piloted during COVID-19; and
- Innovative services drawn from the most effective of the pilot project grants¹ recently awarded to organizations across the state.

Development of this program has begun under the Department's HCBS Improvement Plan². The Department meets every two weeks with the Lifespan Stakeholder Advisory Group which includes

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/blog/dhhs-awards-first-round-grants-innovative-projects-supporting-people-disabilities-2023-02-28>

² <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/about-us/initiatives/home-community-fmap-plan>

individuals with IDD and autism, family members, service providers, advocacy groups, and representatives from the Office of Child and Family Services, Office of MaineCare Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services, Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Department of Education's Office of Special Services. The stakeholder group is advising on the specific services we will include in the new waiver, as well as timing of each phase of implementation.

This bill also establishes important provisions about existing programs. Once Lifespan becomes operational, projected for January 2025, new enrollment under Sections 21 and 29 will be closed, but existing participants of those programs will have the option of continuing in their current waiver programs or transitioning to Lifespan during the second phase of implementation in 2027. Also during the second phase, individuals with Other Related Conditions, who are currently served in Section 20, will be added to Lifespan.

While Lifespan is being developed, OADS will continue to enroll newly eligible adults in Section 29, and use Section 21 reserve capacity to serve those who have Priority 1 needs (at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or homelessness). The Governor's budget includes sufficient funds to continue enrolling all eligible adults while fully addressing the section 29 waitlist by January 2025. Beginning in January 2025, the budget includes funding to enroll 300 adults and 240 children during the first six months of the program. Funding that is freed up from attrition in existing programs will be transferred to Lifespan to expand access in that program over time.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and to make myself available for questions at the work session.