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Written Testimony  
March 27, 2023

*In Support of LD 539*

*An Act to Provide Substance Use Disorder Counseling for MaineCare Members with Acquired Brain Injury*

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Jane Riseman and I am a resident of Harrison, Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation.

I am a “blended family” mother of eight: 2 biological, 4 step and 2 adopted children. Both my adopted children came to our family through the Maine foster care system and adoptive children’s program. With that said, I have over twenty years’ experience working as a therapeutic foster parent with various DHHS programs.

I am here today to speak in favor of LD 539 – An Act to Provide Substance Use Disorder Counseling for Maine Care Members with Acquired Brain Injury. This bill will add substance abuse disorder counseling to the comprehensive neurorehabilitation service system.<sup>1</sup>

I want to share some of the history about our son, Michael, who is now 21 years old. He came into our care as a foster child at the age of two months and we subsequently adopted him at the age of three. He came into the custody of the State when his fugitive parents were arrested in Portland in 2002 for murdering his two siblings. Upon their arrest, Michael was immediately taken to the Barbara Bush Center at Maine Medical where he was evaluated for suspected child abuse. Ultimately, he was diagnosed with a **traumatic brain injury of the frontal lobe and had blood clots on the brain, retinal bleeds in both eyes and fractures to the skull, ribs and legs.**<sup>2</sup> **Because he had so many fractures he couldn’t or wouldn’t move because of his pain. At that time, he was known as “Baby Jason.”**

Keep in mind that in 2002 a lot less was known about traumatic brain injuries in infants, their nature, possible treatments and an understanding of the extent of damage done to a child when this occurs. Probable misdiagnoses quite often led to conclusions that were inaccurate.

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<sup>1</sup> The current neurorehabilitation service system includes care management and coordination, crisis stabilization services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, neuropsychology, neurocognitive retraining, positive neurobehavioral supports and teaching, social skills retraining, counseling, vocational rehabilitation and independent living skills and supports.

<sup>2</sup> Sun Journal News Article, November 5, 2005, <https://www.bing.com/ck/News Article>

Fortunately we know a lot more now about this condition than we did then, but the education has been strenuous.

Michael's care over the years has been constant, intense and all-consuming. Pediatricians, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, psychological evaluations, psychiatry, neuro psychiatry, mental health counselors, and in home supports. Education was a challenge. He was assigned a one-on-one aide K-8 but his condition was described as having mostly behavioral issues. The school system was ill prepared to deal with Michael's real conditions. By ninth grade he was placed out-of-district in a specialized high school where he earned his high school diploma.

At age 18 he applied for and received a medical marijuana card without our knowledge as his legal guardians. He began to abuse cannabis. At age 19 he was introduced to methamphetamine, at age 20 he was introduced to heroin and fentanyl. He turned 21 last Wednesday.

He has been a patient in two treatment centers, 3 detox programs, and attempted to live in 3 different sober living residences. In all those cases he was discharged because of his anti-social behaviors.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for your time to listen to my testimony. I hope you agree that adding substance abuse disorder counseling to the menu of services for neurorehabilitation 102 clinics will create a more complete program to better serve those individuals with acquired brain injuries. Please vote to move this important bill.

I am willing to take any questions you may have at this time.

Jane Riseman