



**Testimony of Jennifer Putnam
MACSP Board Member, Executive Director, Waypoint**

In Support of LD 473
*Resolve, to Expand the Eligibility for and Increase the Number of Hours of Applied Behavior Analysis Services
Authorized by the MaineCare Program*

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 29, 2023**

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

My name is Jennifer Putnam, I am the Executive Director of Waypoint. We are located in southern Maine and provide services for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including a Pre-K through Grade 5 school, case management and residential services, as well as BCBA services for children and adults. I am also a longstanding member of the Maine Association for Community Service Providers (MACSP) Board of Directors and I am here representing our members in strong support of LD 473.

MACSP is the statewide association of 85 individual, mission-driven agencies providing person centered and individualized educational, vocational, residential and community supports, as well as specialized services and care to several thousand of Maine's children and adults who have either intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or brain injuries, so that they may live full and meaningful lives in the community.

I want to thank Representative Craven and the sponsors for bringing this bill forward.

Since 2019, we have asked for support to ensure adequate access to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services for adults with IDD who have complex high behavioral needs and are receiving services under MaineCare Sections 21 or 29 who have complex high behavioral needs.

Right now, children can receive ABA services through school or community settings upwards of 139 hours each year, but when they reach adulthood are limited to only 16.5 hours per year. Many adults who require a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP), a functional assessment and/or a Behavior Management Plan are currently unable to access Board Certified Behavior Analysts who are willing to do the work under such limited circumstances. 16.5 hours, for example, is barely enough time to write an individual positive behavior support plan, and certainly not enough time to write a more complex behavior management plan. Professionals who provide this service do not want to shortchange an individual who requires such a plan in order to manage their behaviors, nor do they want to be shortchanged.

As things currently stand, there are multiple deliverables that are required by the State for Behavior Management and Positive Behavior Support Plans, yet there is not a commensurate mechanism to pay the Board Certified Behavior Analyst to do what is required. This unfunded mandate leaves individuals with the highest behavior management needs without adequate resources to address the behaviors constructively with evidence

based interventions and perpetuates a cycle of inadequately managed behavior that impacts quality of life, housing stability and placement decisions and access to the community.

We applaud the Department for its work with the University of New Hampshire and forthcoming START Model crisis prevention and intervention training opportunities. START is part of the solution to inform and increase competencies throughout the Department and service system, but it will not increase the access in actual hours to the specialized staff needed to oversee successful implementation of individualized plans.

Fewer and fewer providers are able to support people with complex needs, due to an inadequate rate and lack of reimbursement for the utilization of clinicians such as BCBAs. Crisis management is not a solution, nor are costly out of state placements which separate people from family, and community supports.

Increasing the number of hours of behavioral consultation can lead to effective treatment and support of the dozens of Mainers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities who have the highest behavior management needs.

While we would strongly recommend that the language in this bill (ABA Services) mirror the current language in Section 21 and 29 (Behavioral Consultation), as behavioral consultation can be provided by other clinicians / disciplines as well, we support the spirit of this bill and urge your support.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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