

March 18, 2025  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Testimony in Support of LD 769 “An Act Regarding Access to Behavior Health Supports for Adults with Certain Disabilities”**

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

Hello, my name is Regina Bowie. I am a self-advocate, and I live in Presque Isle. I am here today to talk about why I think Maine shouldn't restrain people anymore.

I have personally not been physically restrained, but I have spent years experiencing being held prisoner by other people's words, opinions, wishes and dreams about my life. To me these were emotional and verbal restraints. Physical, verbal, and emotional restraints work the same.

Thankfully when I joined SUFU I was taught that it isn't my fault and how I can deal with it. This is when I started standing up for myself and I am still dealing with this today. To think about my experience and that some of my SUFU friends might also be going through but being physically restrained as well is difficult to think about. I have also witnessed people be restrained and that is a little scary.

There are a lot of people who don't know how to stand up for themselves or how to properly communicate with others. I have been dealing with this for a lot of years. People in general who deal with people living with disabilities need to be trained how to say things without putting people with disabilities down. Training needs to teach people how to really get to know the person before jumping to conclusions, and finding an understanding of what the problem might be. It is important that we aren't restraining people and getting stressed because someone isn't talking to others the way we want them to or lack the necessary ways to communicate why they are behaving that way. We should not be using restraint as a way to control or punish people.

We also need to make sure we have a checks and balances, I was not quite sure if this bill has that in it, but it should be made more clear,

especially about emergency restraints. There needs to be plenty of oversight when we are talking about restricting people's rights.

It is really important to make sure there is a committee in place to review all of these things and I like that there is a self-advocate voice being included. We also need a system in place that people feel like they can report abuse without any fears, issues or retaliation.

I appreciate your time and consideration today for me to share my experience and story of how I feel about restraints.

Sincerely,

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