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Testimony of Representative Drew Gattine presenting

LD 800, An Act to Fund the Provision of Advocacy Services to Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and colleagues on the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Representative Drew Gattine and I represent House District 126, which includes portions of Westbrook, Scarborough and Saco. I am proud to stand before you today as the sponsor of **LD 800, An Act to Fund the Provision of Advocacy Services to Persons with Intellectual Disabilities**.

This legislation seeks just \$50,000 in annual funding to support the work of Disability Rights Maine (DRM), which provides advocacy services to persons with intellectual disabilities statewide in at least five geographically dispersed locations, as required by 34-B M.R.S. § 5005-A.

Some brief history, in 2012, DRM assumed the responsibilities of the former Office of Advocacy, which include:

- Providing critical advocacy to individuals receiving developmental services from the Office of Aging and Disability Services.
- Training individuals and staff about their rights.
- Representing clients in administrative proceedings and in court.
- Supporting individuals in Person-Centered Planning (PCP) meetings.
- Receiving and responding to rights violation reports through the state system.
- Monitoring service settings to ensure quality and compliance.

Despite the importance of their duties, DRM has been flat-funded since 2012 and is experiencing increasing difficulty in retaining staff due to funding limitations – without additional support, DRM risks further reductions in service.

I urge you to support LD 800, which is vital in ensuring that Disability Rights Maine can continue to serve Maine communities and the individuals who rely on their advocacy.

Thank you for your time, your attention and your commitment to supporting all Mainers.