

# DISABILITY RIGHTS MAINE

March 25, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
Cross Office Building, Room 209  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: LD 831 *An Act Regarding Abandoned Vehicles Due to Involuntary  
Psychiatric Hospitalization*

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

My name is Kevin Voyvodich and I am an attorney at Disability Rights Maine (DRM),  
Maine's designated protection and advocacy agency for individuals with disabilities.  
I am here today to testify in support of LD 831.

DRM has become aware of this important issue for individuals held involuntarily in  
psychiatric hospitals who have had their vehicle towed during the mental health crisis  
that lead to the hospitalization. Currently Maine law allows for vehicles towed under  
certain circumstances to be considered abandoned under the law if certain paperwork  
and timelines requirements are met by a towing company.<sup>1</sup> This process does not  
account for the realities faced by people experiencing a psychiatric crisis. For  
individuals who are court-committed to a psychiatric hospital, the timeframe to  
reclaim a vehicle is often too short, and the fees charged by towing companies can be  
prohibitively expensive.

This bill addresses that problem by extending the window for reclaiming a towed  
vehicle to 120 days. This timeframe mirrors the maximum duration someone can be  
held under an initial involuntary psychiatric commitment.<sup>2</sup> It also reflects the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> See 29-A M.R.S. § § 1851-1856

<sup>2</sup> 34-B M.R.S. § 3864

many individuals spend days or even weeks in emergency rooms before being transferred to a psychiatric facility, at which point the involuntary legal process begins.

Further this bill reduces the maximum amount an individual can be required to pay, from \$1,500 to \$600 for the first thirty days of storage fees. Many individuals that I have worked with who are in the hospital have limited funds and this fee reduction better allows them to either cover the cost fully using their own funds or apply for any emergency funding available from the state. This bill also protects the individual's privacy because it will only apply if the person gives permission to share that they are involuntarily hospitalized, which then allows them to obtain the expanded timeline and lower cost.

I will end with two examples of how challenging this can be for an individual. In one situation, one of our state hospital-based advocates and I worked with an individual to retrieve their vehicle. By the time all was said and done, the individual was able to retrieve their vehicle only after obtaining over \$2,000.00 in state funds to do so. If DRM had not intervened, the individual could have lost title to their vehicle, which they still owed money on. In another example, an individual reached out to one of our state hospital advocates about their car, but unfortunately the vehicle title had already been transferred to the towing company and the car had been sold.

The examples above clearly show how high the financial cost can be for the individual. Even worse, in some cases when the person finally is in a place to look to retrieve their vehicle, it might already be gone. This bill simply tries to provide a person, held involuntarily in mental health crisis, more of a chance to retain their vehicle. Once a person is ready for hospital discharge after receiving treatment, they should not be leaving without vital access to the vehicle that they owned when they entered the hospital.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin D. Voyvodich', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kevin D. Voyvodich

Managing Attorney