

132nd Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 6

Senator Marianne Moore
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0003
(207) 287-1505
Marianne.Moore@legislature.maine.gov

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

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and my fellow distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. As you know, my name is Marianne Moore. I proudly represent Senate District 6 which includes all of Washington County and 16 Communities in Eastern Hancock County as well.

I'm here to introduce LD984 – *An Act Regarding Abandoned Vehicles Due to Involuntary Psychiatric Hospitalization*.

Last fall I was contacted by Disability Rights Maine (DRM) and asked if I would be willing to submit this bill addressing an issue that is being seen in hospitals, mostly Riverview, due to the longer stays being experienced. DRM and the State Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) have become more aware of a small but very important issue that happens to some individuals who have a vehicle but end up in crisis and are hospitalized. Often if an individual shows up to an ER and their car is in the parking lot or even somewhere else when a crisis happens, tow companies get called and often if a person in crisis doesn't think of the issue (I can totally relate as to when I have been in crisis), towing companies have a lot of leeway to take ownership of the vehicle, which may be someone's only possession, etc. if no one thinks to make a plan to help the person get their car put somewhere safe. DRM has worked with several individuals that have had this happen and some of the vehicles are not just beat up cars either. OBH has helped with wrap around funds to save people's cars. The general concept of this bill is to have a few guardrails in place when this happens.

To give you a brief idea of how the whole "Abandoned Auto" Statute works... After a vehicle has been towed and declared "Abandoned" either in a parking lot or on a public roadway, after 14 days the towing company notifies the Secretary of State (SOS) who in turn sends a letter to the owner giving them 14 days to respond or take action. When there is no response, the ownership of the vehicle goes to the towing company. In the case of involuntary/voluntary admission to psychiatric hospitals due to a medical crisis, the vehicle may remain with the towing company for an extended period of time and ultimately assigned

ownership under the current statute because the owner never receives the notification from the SOS. When someone is hospitalized in a crisis situation, they could be involuntarily hospitalized for months and ultimately lose their vehicle, costing them thousands of dollars to get the vehicle back and regain ownership. 😞

I will add, I understand the Secretary of State's office is working with Sen. Nangle on a bill for a study group about the towing industry more broadly. We want this bill to have the best likelihood of success so if the SOS office is leaning towards the study bill, then we are willing to go there if they include specific language referencing our bill language in some way into the study group, so it does not get lost in a much broader discussion of the working group.

Thank you! I would take any questions you might have regarding this bill!