

May 9, 2025

Good day, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Kandie Cleaves. I am the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the Consumer Council System of Maine, as well as a Region 3 At-Large Rep and Bangor area Local Chair. I am a family member and friend to many with mental health issues, and I am a Peer. I am here to testify neither for nor against **LD 1799: "Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Review the Progressive Treatment Program and Processes by Which a Person May Be Involuntarily Admitted to a Psychiatric Hospital or Receive Court-Ordered Community Treatment"**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality that is mandated and funded into legislation that brings forward the voices of those with lived experience in an advisory capacity to the legislature and the State.

There was a time when I sought court ordered treatment for a minor loved one. Even though at that time I did not fully understand the harm that can come from forcing treatment on someone, I still asked for it to be the least restrictive as possible because I strongly believe in the right to personal freedoms when at all possible. Over time I have learned of the long-term harm many medications can cause, in fact I myself have liver issues and other problems after having spent years on medications for my mental health. Having a variety of treatment options within the community that can be accessed by choice and when needed rather than having to wait months for help would along with the government assisting in ending the stigma around mental health rather than creating it, would reduce the amount of people receiving court intervention.

I would like to ask that when reviewing the progressive treatment program and processes that you remember to include several voices of those with lived experience. Not only are those with experience in this the most qualified to speak to the issues, in this case we are the only voices mandated into legislation to do so. The Consumer Council System of Maine should hold at least one of the seats. Peers should hold as many seats as providers if not more if you want to see effective change.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kandie Cleaves
Garland