

MAINE DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES OVERSIGHT AND ADVISORY BOARD

LD 2212 An Act Making Unified Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027

Section Z363 and PART G-Section G-1

Dear Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Gattine and Myer and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

I am Bonnie-Jean Brooks, from Stockton Springs, Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Services Oversight and Advisory Board (OAB), here in support of LD. 2212, Section Z263 and Language PART G-Section G-1.

I retired as founding CEO of OHI in Bangor in 2022 after 42 years. I was asked to step in as Interim full-time Executive Director of the OAB for 1 year - 3 years ago. There are no other staff. I have been taking home \$21.69 an hour –more than twice my last paycheck in my former job receiving only sick time and vacation benefits.

My decision to accept this position was not based on financial benefit. On the contrary, it was based on my lifelong commitment to persons with intellectual disabilities and autism, including being guardian of a woman with IDD for 45 years. As past Chair and member of both the Consumer Advisory Board and the OAB, I have spent decades advocating for systemic change to improve the quality of life of people I care about.

The MDSOAB, originally known as The Consumer Advisory Board (CAB), was established on July 14, 1978. Its role was described in Section T. of Part A of the Pineland Consent Decree, a Federal court order. That Decree's successor, the Community Consent Decree, continued the role of the CAB.

Legislation was established in 2007 as part of the 'mechanisms of future compliance'. It continued the role of the CAB until such time as the Community Consent Decree would be terminated when the state would eventually achieve substantial compliance. That eventually occurred in 2010 – 16 ago. The CAB was renamed the Maine Developmental Services Oversight and Advisory Board (MDSOAB).

The MDSOAB was established by Title 5, Section 12004-J, subsection 15. It has fifteen members comprised of members in categories described in the statute. Its primary function is to *"provide independent oversight over any programs and services for adults with intellectual disabilities or autism that are authorized,*

funded or supported by the department or any other agency or department of state government.” This is primarily DHHS.

The MDSOAB shall “provide advice and systemic recommendations to the commissioner, the Governor and the Legislature regarding policies, priorities, budgets, and legislation affecting the rights and interests of persons with intellectual disabilities or autism.”

The statute directs DAFS to administer the budget of the board. The MDSOAB must submit a proposed budget to DAFS. DAFS must include “in its estimate of expenditure and appropriation requirements” filed pursuant to Title 5, section 1165, sufficient funds, listed in a separate account as a separate line item, to enable the board to perform its duties.”

The Contract with the state and MDSOAB has remained the same since 2010 -16 years - while at the same time the compounded C.P.I. has increased by 47.42%.

The budget increase before you that is requested by DAFS is to adequately fund a competitive wage and benefits for a part-time Executive Director and a full-time Program Manager.

The MDSOAB has been chronically under-funded for decades. We have been unable to fulfill our responsibility. Your support of this DAFS request will assist us to make significant gains in performing our statutory role, which we have been unable to achieve.

Our Board is asking you to support this request – the first one in almost 3 decades.

Very respectfully:

Bonnie-Jean Brooks, Executive Director, MDSOAB