



February 8, 2021

Senator Susan Deschambault, Chair
Representative Charlotte Warren, Chair
Joint Committee On Criminal Justice and Public Safety
State House, Room 436
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony in Opposition to LD 28, An Act To Create an Alert System To Notify the Public When a Person with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability Is Missing

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Staci Converse and I am the Director and Managing Attorney of Disability Rights Maine's Protection and Advocacy for Developmental Disabilities Program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to LD 28.

It is our understanding that, as written, the legislation would create an alert system for all individuals with developmental disabilities. We oppose this. It would stigmatize an already stigmatized group of individuals. This would be particularly true of adults with disabilities. Moreover, it not based on the individual's capabilities or even if there is suspicion that the person is in danger. Furthermore, it is unclear if it is necessary; there is already a silver alert system that permits an alert to be filed for individuals under the age of 60 where the person has "an irreversible deterioration of intellectual faculties" and "whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety and health of the person." 23 M.R.S. §2231. DRM opposes the proposed legislation.

From a conversation with Representative Stewart, it is our understanding that this bill was intended to create an alert system for children with developmental disabilities. We would continue to urge the committee not to single out this group of stigmatized individuals for a public alert system. Instead, if the Committee finds that some sort of alert system is necessary, it could expand it to include all children.

For the foregoing reasons, DRM does not support LD 28 as written.

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Staci" followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line.

Staci Converse
Managing Attorney