



Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

February 10, 2021

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 118: “An Act to Address Maine’s Shortage of Behavioral Health Services for Minors.”

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and the distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Nancy Cronin and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council)¹. I am writing in full Support of LD 118 An Act to Address Maine's Shortage of Behavioral Health Services for Minors.

This bill aims at addressing what, in my field, we call “stuck kids.” Children stuck at the emergency department with nowhere to go to serve their complex needs. The Developmental Disability Council has known many “stuck kids.” They sit in small, windowless rooms without things to occupy them and are often attended by security guards as there is no staff dedicated to “stuck kids.” This is certainly not an insurance reimbursable service that the hospitals are providing. Some of these children have conditions such as autism and have sensory challenges which poses a nightmare as the lighting, noises, and smells abound in the small area in which they are placed. This sometimes can result in the child exhibiting challenging behavior. None of these things are pleasant for anybody.

Some of these children were dropped off by a residential provider that wasn’t successful. The term “dropped” becomes even more profound. These children sit waiting for a new residential placement. There are so many things wrong with a system that “drops” kids. But what actually is going on? We don’t really know at what frequency the scenario I painted for you occurs. We know it does happen – but how often? What other scenarios are creating these “stuck kids?”

LD 118 is the first step to assess the problem. It simply directs the Department to collect data, analyze it, and report annually to this body. With this information, a plan can be developed to prevent “stuck kids.”

¹ Councils on Developmental Disabilities were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) in 1970. Maine’s DD Council has been advocating for individuals with Developmental Disabilities (DD) for over 40 years. The DD Council is a federally-funded, independent organization with members from across the state, including persons with disabilities, family members, and representatives of public and private agencies which provide services and/or funding for services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Please pass this bill without hesitation. We realize the State is in a tight financial position but what are we spending on the “stuck kids” sitting in hospital rooms? Surely collecting data and adjusting the system to prevent kids getting stuck in the first place will be ultimately cheaper financially and cost less in human suffering.

Thank you for reading this testimony and I hope you will fully support this bill.

Sincerely,

Nancy Cronin
Executive Director