

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is David Cowing and I live in Woolwich. It is good to see you all again.

I want to speak very briefly in support of L.D. 716 An Act To Enhance and Improve the Maine Developmental Services Oversight and Advisory Board and To Establish the Aging and Disability Mortality Review Panel.

After the painful OIG report in August of 2017, many of us have advocated for such a mortality review panel over the course of several years now. The HHS Committee has supported establishing this panel several times, and it is now included in the Governor's biennial budget.

My motivation for speaking to you this morning arises largely from a desire to remember a family friend who had multiple disabilities, and whose death was, to my knowledge, never fully investigated or explained. Bradley was nonverbal, required assistance for basic skills such as eating and dressing, and required round the clock monitoring for his uncontrolled seizure disorder. Following heroic efforts by his parents to find an appropriate living situation for him when they finally recognized they were no longer capable of providing the intense support he required, Brad began living away from his family for the first time in his life. Several months later he was found dead in his bedroom. It was a tragic, and perhaps, preventable death. Needless to say, it was devastating for his family.

When I talked to Bradley's mother at his memorial service, I was amazed at her strength and lack of bitterness at the loss of her son. As she was brave enough to share publicly at the time with others, her only wish was that something like this would never again have to be experienced by another family, and that she might someday know the whole story of the circumstances of Bradley's death.

Establishing this Aging and Disability Mortality Review Panel is a necessary and overdue step in the right direction towards fulfilling her wish.

Thank you for your time today.

David Cowing
Woolwich

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