

Jeff McCabe  
MSEA-SEIU Local 1989

TESTIMONY OF JEFF MCCABE, DIRECTOR OF POLITICS & LEGISLATION,  
MSEA-SEIU LOCAL 1989, BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

In Support of LD 629, Resolve, To Establish the Task Force To Study Improving  
Safety and Provide Protection from Violence for Health Care Workers in Hospitals  
and Mental Health Care Providers, Sponsored by Representative Walter Riseman

9 AM March 23, 2021, Cross Office Building Room 209

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I'm Jeff McCabe, Director of Politics & Legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union (MSEA-SEIU Local 1989). Maine Service Employees Association is a labor union representing over 13,000 workers and retirees, mainly in the public sector, statewide, including State of Maine workers employed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. This includes workers at Maine's two state psychiatric hospitals, Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center in Bangor and Riverview Psychiatric Center in Augusta.

I am here in support of LD 629. This resolve establishes the Task Force To Study Improving Safety and Provide Protection from Violence for Health Care Workers in Hospitals and Mental Health Care Providers. The task force would be directed to submit a report and any suggested legislation for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature by December 1, 2021.

Instances of violence and assaults at health care facilities, including psychiatric hospitals, deserve our immediate attention. The current security practices at these facilities also deserve our attention. Over the past decade, workers at Riverview Psychiatric Center in particular have been assaulted hundreds of times as staffing didn't keep up with the increasing numbers of patients from Maine's courts and jails. Reported assaults on Riverview workers over the years include a worker being stabbed multiple times in the head and hand with a pen. Another worker was punched in the head from behind and hit so hard her eardrum ruptured. Yet another worker was attacked with a chair and suffered serious facial and eye injuries. Some of the attacks on Riverview workers resulted in injuries so serious the workers required hospitalization.

The proposed task force in LD 629 would be charged with developing a plan to improve future security for Maine's health care workers and mental health care providers.

This proposed task force is long overdue. That's why LD 629 merits your support. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions