



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**Testimony of Rep. Rebecca Millett presenting
LD 962, An Act To Appropriate Funds to Eliminate Waiting Lists for Home and
Community Based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury
and Other Related Conditions
and
LD 1490, An Act To Improve Home and Community-based Services for Adults with
Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related Conditions
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

Good afternoon, Senator Claxton, Rep. Meyer and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Representative Rebecca Millett representing House District 30 which is most of Cape Elizabeth. I am pleased to present **LD 962, An Act To Appropriate Funds To Eliminate Waiting Lists for Home and Community-based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related Conditions** and **LD 1490, An Act To Improve Home and Community-based Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Brain Injury and Other Related Conditions**.

These bills seek to invest in and amend the system of care for adults with intellectual disabilities, autism, brain injury and other related conditions to reduce and eliminate MaineCare waiver waiting lists for home and community-based services.

I have served on the Committee for Education and Cultural Affairs going on nine years. We spend a lot of time trying to make sure all of Maine's children have equal opportunities to reach their full potential, including children who qualify for special education services. Across the state, dedicated educators are working hard to make sure their students are ready to transition out of school into their adult lives. Some students require more assistance than others and this holds true into their adult lives. Unfortunately, the transition often is derailed by long delays in qualifying for adult services and precious progress is lost and often regression results erasing the decades of growth through public education. I understand the Department for Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Education (DOE) are discussing a possible "life span" waiver which sounds like a promising idea and that DHHS is working on other possible reforms. The development and implementation of these reforms I have been told would occur over a three-to-four-year time horizon. I appreciate that the work to strengthen the system is happening, but Maine families can't wait three to four years for their adult children to come off the waitlist.

As a state, we must commit to policies and to providing the necessary resources that support persons with intellectual disabilities, autism and brain injuries in leading independent lives and as such not imposing waitlists or delaying services to accomplish that goal. There obviously are constraints as to how quickly the department staff and providers can work through the waitlists which should lessen the fiscal note at least for the first year. Having said that, the legislature should acknowledge that we simply can't make real progress by funding Section 18, 21 and 29 waitlists without increasing Mainecare reimbursement rates which needs to be addressed this session as well.

Last year I had the great fortune of sitting on a panel with Marco Orlando and Tucker Conley. They are great self-advocates, and I hope you take to heart what they will share with you along with, Speak Up For Us and family advocates.

Maine families seeking care for their loved ones through these waiver services are in crisis. And they've been in crisis for too long. It's time we stop nibbling around the edges of the waitlists and make real progress. Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.