



April 21, 2021

Senator Ned Claxton  
Representative Michelle Meyer  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Testimony in Favor of “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”**

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

My name is Monique Stairs and I am the Executive Director of Speaking Up For Us (SUFU). SUFU has been the self-advocacy network in Maine since 1993 and we are an established 501(c)3 non-profit. Self-Advocacy is part of the civil rights movement for people living with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to advocate and voice their opinions on issues that are important to them. Our Board of Directors is made up 100% of adults living with I/DD, which makes us a unique organization.

Please accept this written testimony in favor of **“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”**

Self-advocates want to have opportunities to live their lives with autonomy just like people living without disabilities. In order to live a meaningful life, many people living with I/DD need support to access their community, find and sustain employment, and maintain their homes. Here in Maine, there are around 2000 people waiting for the services that can help them lead a fulfilled and independent life, and of those people 600 individuals are lingering in limbo with no services.

Historically, the treatment of people living with I/DD has been riddled with mistreatment, abuse, neglect, and little access to the community. Maine made a promise when Pineland was closed to provide services and supports for people to access their communities. There have been many lawsuits and decrees outlining that Maine must comply to meet the needs of people living with disabilities, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Olmstead Decision, and the most recent Aldrich lawsuit filed here in Maine.

Last year, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic many families, advocates, and self-advocates came before the Health and Human Services Committee to ask the legislature to fund the wait lists regarding Section 29. The bill last year passed committee unanimously, but due to circumstances surrounding the pandemic this bill was not completed. The wait lists for all waiver sections have continued to grow, and the Home and Community Based Services system in Maine has faced additional crisis.

SUFU urges the members of the HHS Committee to communicate to Appropriations that funding the wait lists is a priority for people living with I/DD here in Maine. SUFU believes that receiving the right amount of quality supports leads to people living with I/DD leading a more autonomous and fulfilling life.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit this testimony in favor of LD 962.

Sincerely,

Monique Stairs-Executive Director, Speaking Up For Us

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