



Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
MaineHealth

May 3, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Dr. Matthew Siegel, Vice President of Medical Affairs for the Developmental Disorders Service Line of Maine Behavioral Healthcare. I also have over 15 years of experience in treating, researching, and publishing on treatment of serious challenging behaviors in people with autism and other developmental disabilities. Most recently, I chaired a national summit on challenging behavior for Autism Speaks.

I am here to strongly support LD 1574, "An Act to Ensure Support for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism with High Behavioral Need." For far too long, adults with autism and other developmental disabilities in Maine have not had adequate access to appropriate behavioral treatment and supports. Given the well documented higher rate of challenging behavior in this population, and the need to prevent challenging behaviors from becoming crises that land adults in the emergency department, this population needs more access to treatment and care, not less.

We are very appreciative of this legislation, which will increase access to appropriately qualified behavioral assessment and treatment services for adults with developmental disabilities and challenging behaviors. Adults in this population have extremely limited access to behavioral health practitioners.

In addition to this legislation, we support the development of a statewide comprehensive behavioral health plan that invests in appropriate behavior assessment and treatment services for this vulnerable population, and considers increasing access to psychologist or behavior analyst services for developing and overseeing behavior plans.

In summary, this is a much needed bill that addresses a critical issue in our community, and will result in an increase in access to basic behavioral assessment and treatment services and a decrease in expensive and traumatic emergency room behavioral crisis visits. Thank you for your consideration of this important request and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Matthew Siegel, MD  
Vice President of Medical Affairs  
Developmental Disorders Service Line  
Maine Behavioral Healthcare

Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics  
Tufts University School of Medicine