

MaineHealth

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of LD 408, “Resolve, To Improve Access to Neurobehavioral Services” Wednesday, February 20, 2019

MaineHealth Member Organizations:

Franklin Community Health
Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Synernet
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family:

MaineHealth Accountable Care
Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates:

MaineGeneral Health
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 408, “Resolve, To Improve Access to Neurobehavioral Services.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. Every day MaineHealth’s local health systems are challenged with discharging patients to the next appropriate level of care. One such patient population is those with significant behavioral challenges and complex medical needs that require short-term care until they are stabilized and able to transition to a long-term care facility.

For example, in 2018, three patients with severe brain injury needed to be transferred from Maine Medical Center to a facility in Florida because their needs required a level of care that was not available in the state of Maine. These patients presented with aggression and were a danger to themselves and staff, causing injuries to members of their care team. They could not be managed at a group home level, and, in fact, failed community placements. Nursing homes were also not equipped with the expertise and staffing necessary to manage these patients. Only a neurobehavioral unit could effectively and safely serve them.

Not only was it extremely costly for the State to transfer these patients (air ambulance and a negotiated MaineCare rate was necessary), but these patients, who are already vulnerable, were transferred thousands of miles from their homes and their supports, causing disruption in their support system and suffering for their families.

For those reasons, I urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 408, “Resolve, To Improve Access to Neurobehavioral Services,” to ensure that the State of Maine is better equipped to provide the appropriate care to individuals with brain injury and behavioral health care needs. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.