September 9, 2025

Joint Committee Senate Chair Robyn K. Kennedy
Joint Committee Representative Chair Jay D. Livingstone
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

**RE:** [**H.282**](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H282)**/**[**S.168**](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S168) – ***An Act to increase the safety of individuals with disabilities relying on life-support equipment.***

Dear Senate Chair Kennedy, Representative Chair Livingstone and members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities,

The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) is pleased to submit this testimony on [HB.282](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H282__;!!CPANwP4y!Te_K-XVB5xAYmsoHxZP0jP0VUGs0zUb0GtN60bZz98-ePs3DUi6zaNdQK_N1j_BcpJBSXci1rNLGA9C6Pod02MU$)/[SB.168](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S168__;!!CPANwP4y!Te_K-XVB5xAYmsoHxZP0jP0VUGs0zUb0GtN60bZz98-ePs3DUi6zaNdQK_N1j_BcpJBSXci1rNLGA9C6PtSiMFQ$) – An Act to increase the safety of individuals with disabilities relying on life-support equipment. This bill is also known as “Tommy’s Law.”  The original version of this bill was filed after Tommy, a man with developmental disabilities, was released from the hospital and shortly thereafter died in his group home. This preventable tragedy occurred because Tommy’s residential staff did not properly monitor his life saving equipment. The provisions in this bill offer continuity of patient care and strengthen post-hospitalization oversight that could avert similar tragedies in the future.

This legislation would amend an existing law to require, in part, review of hospital discharge plans for patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) by their residential nursing staff. The nurse would then advise residential staff and caregivers about discharge instructions including the use of life-support technology and equipment. It also specifies that the Department of Public Health will create rules, share information, and raise awareness about following this law.

People with DD have physical, cognitive, and other impairments requiring ongoing and multidisciplinary coordinated care. Transitioning from a stay in the hospital back to their residence can present serious health risks if discharge instructions are not closely followed.

Many people with DD and medically complex conditions rely on residential staff for their daily care. Countless residential facilities are chronically understaffed due to the workforce crisis. Requiring a nurse to advise overworked residential staff about discharge instructions and life support equipment use during a stressful transition period will help ensure individuals’ safety. It protects people with DD who can’t clearly

communicate about their health care needs, and those who don’t have family or other caregivers nearby who can advocate on their behalf.

We know that systemic inequities in the health care system contribute to people with developmental disabilities being less likely to receive the same quality of medical treatment as nondisabled people. Comprehensive health care laws and policies like this are needed for the well-being of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with chronic medical conditions.

In summary, this bill, which is endorsed by the MDDC, has the potential to improve safety and health care outcomes for people with disabilities after they are hospitalized. The MDDC believes that it will positively impact people with developmental disabilities and decrease the risk of rehospitalization or worse for some of our most vulnerable residents in Massachusetts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Liz Fancher

Program Specialist

***MDDC HEALTHCARE SPOTLILGHT:*** [*download*](https://www.mass.gov/doc/mddc-policy-spotlight-healthcare/download)