



131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2024

Legislative Document

No. 2105

S.P. 898

In Senate, January 3, 2024

**Resolve, to Protect and Enhance Access to Behavioral Health
Services in Androscoggin County and Surrounding Communities**

(EMERGENCY)

Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D M Grant".

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator ROTUNDO of Androscoggin.
Cosponsored by Representative CLOUTIER of Lewiston and
Senators: BALDACCI of Penobscot, TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin, Representatives: ABDI
of Lewiston, CRAVEN of Lewiston, GATTINE of Westbrook, LAJOIE of Lewiston, LEE of
Auburn, SHAW of Auburn.

1 **Emergency preamble. Whereas,** acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** St. Mary's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, or "St. Mary's," is the
4 only provider of most acute behavioral health care services in the region that it serves,
5 which includes Androscoggin County and surrounding communities; and

6 **Whereas,** the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and related factors have resulted in
7 extraordinary operating losses for St. Mary's in recent years, which are projected to
8 continue in 2024, and these losses have disproportionately arisen from the delivery of a
9 wide range of acute behavioral health care services; and

10 **Whereas,** the recent, tragic mass shooting in Lewiston and its severe impact on the
11 community has highlighted the need for expanded behavioral health services in the greater
12 Lewiston-Auburn region, a need that has grown rapidly and has outstripped the existing
13 capacity of health care providers to care for those with serious behavioral health needs; and

14 **Whereas,** although St. Mary's is taking a wide range of measures to improve its
15 operating results, including measures aimed at reducing overhead expenses, the magnitude
16 of its losses will, if not remedied, force it to abandon its carefully developed plans to
17 provide new and expanded behavioral health services to meet this existing and growing
18 need and potentially to curtail behavioral health services and other services to address the
19 unavailability of funds to cover its losses; and

20 **Whereas,** St. Mary's is also a key provider of other services to underserved
21 populations in the region that it serves and thus a crucial contributor to this State's efforts
22 to address disparities in access to health care, yet these services also will be in jeopardy if
23 temporary relief from the losses associated with providing acute behavioral health care
24 services cannot be provided; and

25 **Whereas,** it is therefore essential to provide immediate funding support for St. Mary's
26 to bridge the gap as it implements plans that will reduce costs and improve services in the
27 future; and

28 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
29 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
30 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
31 therefore, be it

32 **Sec. 1. Emergency funding to preserve health care access. Resolved:** That
33 the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide a grant of emergency funding
34 to sustain and improve behavioral health care services delivered by St. Mary's Regional
35 Medical Center in Lewiston, reflecting the medical center's estimate of losses and
36 immediate needs. Funds made available by this resolve must be disbursed no later than
37 July 1, 2024.

38 **Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. Resolved:** That the following
39 appropriations and allocations are made.

40 **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF**
41 **Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Z199**

