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February 23, 2023

Sen. Margaret Rotundo, Chair  
Rep. Melanie Sachs, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations  
& Financial Affairs  
Maine State Legislature  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Sen. Joseph Baldacci, Chair  
Rep. Michele Meyer, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Health  
and Human Services  
Maine State Legislature  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Re: *Letter in support of the Biennial Budget, Part A, related to MaineCare rates for behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment***

Dear Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Sachs, and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee;  
Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Meyers, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Coalition to Ensure Fair Access to Opioid Addiction Treatment, we are pleased to write in support of the provisions related to the MaineCare rates related to substance use disorder treatment in Part A of the Governor's Biennial Budget proposal (pp. 377; 410).

**About us.** Our Coalition is comprised of all twelve opioid treatment provider (OTP) clinics licensed by the State of Maine to offer medication-assisted treatment services utilizing methadone. Our Coalition serves thousands of Mainers with opioid use disorder from clinics located throughout Maine, approximately 70% of whom are MaineCare eligible.

**Discussion.** Substance use disorder treatment is a bipartisan issue that affects the lives of all Maine people. In the last biennium, the Legislature directed the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a process to review MaineCare rates for behavioral health services, including providers of substance use disorder treatment. The rate setting review process, which included rate studies conducted by Burns & Associates, was conducted during the latter half of 2022 and involved multiple stakeholders, including our Coalition. As a result of the review process, MaineCare rates for OTP services were increased to reflect substantial increases in costs faced by providers. The increase was essential to help thousands of Mainers afflicted with opioid use disorder.

By way of background, MaineCare rates for OTP services in Maine have historically not kept pace with inflation – and only very recently have rates started to catch up. OTP services are paid for through a bundled weekly rate that was originally set in the late 1990s, and this rate was not increased for more than a decade. In the early 2010s, MaineCare rates for OTP services were cut by 25%, which led to a reduction in Mainers receiving treatment. In 2018, rates were restored to 1990 era levels, and in 2019, the Mills Administration instituted the first significant rate increase in decades. In response to the new rates, for the first time in years, several new OTP clinics were able to open in parts of the state which previously did

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not have service. One of the new clinics is set to open within the next month in the Augusta area. Other new clinics have opened in Presque Isle and Saco.

Thanks to the rate review process set in motion last year by the Legislature, OTP rates were further increased this year. Although the new rates remain below the 1990's rates when adjusted for inflation, and below the rates used for OTP services in the Medicare program, the new rates will be instrumental in helping OTP clinics hire and retain needed staff, allow new clinics to open, and help make life-saving OTP services available to more Mainers.

For these reasons, we urge the Legislature to appropriate the funds set forth in the proposed budget to support the MaineCare rate increases resulting from the recent rate-setting process directed by the Maine Legislature. These rates will help improve treatment services, improve access, and keep more Mainers alive.

**Conclusion.** We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in support of these provisions of the Biennial Budget proposal, and if you have questions or need any other information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Cohen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James I. Cohen  
Counsel to OTP Coalition

cc: Gordon Smith, Director of Opioid Response, State of Maine  
Katherine Coutu, State Opioid Treatment Authority, State of Maine