



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony in Opposition to LD 1094
"An Act Regarding the Allocation of Funds Awarded to Maine
Due to the Opioid Settlement."

Sponsored by Representative Brennan

April 3, 2023

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Malory Shaughnessy and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community based mental health and substance use treatment providers, providing services to over 80,000 Maine men, women, and children. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in opposition to LD 1094, "An Act Regarding the Allocation of Funds Awarded to Maine Due to the Opioid Settlement." In 2022, as part of an amendment to the Maine State-Subdivision Memorandum of understanding and Agreement Regarding Use of Settlement Funds created the Maine Recovery Council "to direct the disbursement of recovery funds for recovery purposes on a statewide basis for the uses allowed" by the MOU. LD 1094 transfers funds from the Maine Recovery Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Corrections and the Department of Education for substance use and mental health intervention and treatment programs for specific individuals served by those departments.

Last session, I stood before this committee in support of the Maine Recovery Council because "much like the Fund for a Healthy Maine was established to do good in Maine, and was built on the settlement funds for misdeeds and misleading advertisements and statements by some tobacco companies, we now have the opportunity to do good in Maine built on the settlement funds for misdeeds and misleading advertising and statements by some pharmaceutical companies. And I am sure that similarly to the Fund for a Healthy Maine, there will need to be advocates to protect the fund and make sure it remains true to the intent of its creation -- to assure that it is not siphoned off to a myriad of other purposes in the general fund."

And here we are. The decisions about the disbursement of the opioid settlement funds should be made by the Recovery Council – with an eye toward the entire state. Additionally, decisions about spending of the opioid settlement funds should be guided by principles expressed at the outset.

To guide jurisdictions in the use of these funds, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health¹ encourages the adoption of five guiding principles:

1. Spend money to save lives.
2. Use evidence to guide spending.
3. Invest in youth prevention.
4. Focus on racial equity.
5. Develop a transparent, inclusive decision-making process.

The proposal before you today contains a transfer of millions of dollars to the Department of Corrections. That transfer flies in the face of the guiding principles for Opioid Settlement Funds. For these reasons, and many more, the Alliance stands in strong opposition to this proposal. I thank you for your time today and am happy to answer any questions you have for me.

¹, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Accessed 04.01.2023. <https://opioidprinciples.jhsph.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Opioid-Principles-Doc.pdf>