

Leslie Clark
Portland Recovery Community Center
LD 979

Written Testimony of Leslie Clark

In Favor of LD 979:

Resolve, to Fund Treatment Services and Certain Transportation Costs for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder

Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 979

April 3, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Leslie Clark. I am a person in long-term recovery and serve as Executive Director of Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC.) I am writing to you in favor of LD 979, a resolve to fund treatment and certain transportation costs for individuals with substance use disorder.

Maine has been especially hit hard by devastation and loss from the national opioid epidemic. Last year we lost 716 Mainers to fatal overdoses. As a recovery community center, we witness every day the heartache of addiction. However, we also witness the great hope of recovery as more and more people's lives are saved and their dependency on dangerous substances is alleviated.

The journey to finding and sustaining recovery often begins with medically managed withdrawal aka detoxification. Following detoxification, many seek additional support through inpatient treatment, intensive outpatient (IOP) programs, recovery residences, recovery community center participation, and more. We know that Mainers seeking recovery from SUD are facing a gaping hole in the continuum of care. There are currently not enough accessible detoxification and treatment beds available to meet the demand of people that want help.

In 2022, PRCC conducted a series of statewide listening sessions with persons with SUD(s), and we asked them what obstacles they face when seeking treatment. The top barriers included lack of transportation, lack of financial resources or health insurance, and long waitlists. If LD 979 is passed, waiting lists for detoxification and treatment beds will go down. Furthermore, 50% of these newly funded beds will be accessible to MaineCare members and will make cost less of a barrier. This bill also helps alleviate the cost of transportation of MaineCare members to detoxification facilities.

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), prevention efforts and treatment approaches for addiction are generally as successful as those for other chronic diseases. In order for treatment to be successful, the barriers to access detoxification and treatment beds must be lowered. If LD 979 is passed, more Mainers will have the opportunity to access the essential services necessary for entering recovery.

The window of time in which a person with active SUD wants help is often small. When a person with SUD decides they are ready to seek recovery, there needs to be beds available before their resolve subsides. Increased funding for accessible detoxification and treatment beds will save lives, prevent more families from immeasurable heartache, and create healthier communities.

On behalf of PRCC I urge you to pass LD 979, Resolve to Fund Treatment Services and Certain Transportation Costs for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder.

Sincerely,

Leslie M. Clark

Executive Director
Portland Recovery Community Center