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LD 540

Members of the Health and Human Services Committee; thank you for your time in reading

Testimony from the Intentional Peer Support Advisory Committee (IPSAC) IN SUPPORT OF An Act to Establish Peer Respite Centers for Adults with Mental Health Challenges in Maine

The Intentional Peer Support Advisory Committee (IPSAC) is a group of Certified Intentional Peer Support Specialists who advise and support the Department of Health and Human Services in the continued development and fidelity of Intentional Peer Support (IPS) practices in Maine.

This bill is a step in the right direction when it comes to offering a solution to the complex problems and situations we are seeing in the emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, other inpatient psychiatric programs, and at some community based clinical programs.

As IPSAC has said in other testimony, when a person is supported in the community and is offered choices, not directives, of treatment (because one size does not fit all in the mental health world) the burden on emergency departments and hospitals will be eased.

Having the option to go to a peer respite means a person will not have their life interrupted. Those housing vouchers and applications, those hard to get medical appointments, that job, that new friendship will not be put on hold, with a chance of disappearing.

Peer Respite centers are an alternative resource for people when going through a mental health crisis. It is a safe space where a person can have access to an Intentional Peer Support Specialist and have those difficult conversations that can help a person to heal from a traumatic environment/situation. This kind of treatment option utilizes community based resources to heal and builds on the strength of the community. A person is able to move beyond immediate urgency without going to an emergency department, where they risk trauma and languishing for days or months with no treatment or resolve.

From IPSAC's personal perspective, most of us wish that an alternative choice had existed when we needed it. For most of us, having those difficult conversations that only an intentional peer support specialist would have, or taking the Intentional Peer Support training, is what made the difference in our lives. We often say and hear, "If I had met a CIPSS..." or "If I had been able to go to a peer respite...", things would have been different. Peer Respite Centers would allow us to connect with a person with lived experience to normalize what we were feeling or going through. Please bring Peer Respite back to Maine!

As the organization which oversees the Certified Intentional Peer Support Program in Maine, which the peer respites will employ, we look forward to collaboration and involvement in the development of these much needed programs.

Thank you for your time. Please vote Out to Pass.

Members of IPSAC
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