



Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyers and the good members of the HHS Committee;

My name is Betsy Sweet, and I represent the Behavioral Health Community Collaborative – eight non-profit community based mental health agencies for children and adults. (Sweetser, Opportunity Alliance, Spurwink, Shalom House, KidsPeace, Volunteers of America, Gateway Community Services, Oxford County Mental Health Services).

I testify today in support of LD 540 – A bill to establish two peer respite centers.

You will hear from the Consumer Council and NAMI and others the research that documents the importance and success of peer services in providing mental health support and recovery. All too often as a state we have done “token” input from consumers...add one consumer to a task force or work group, ask for services for people to have access to one consumer who is and advocate, etc. The one notable exception is the Peer Warm line, which is very successful in providing much needed support as well as helping divert people from more intensive services.

In creating two new peer respite centers, the state would be winning in multiple ways. It would be using certified peer support specialists to provide what the research shows is critical and effective respite services. These short-term respite programs are often the boost people need to continue on their pathway to recovery. It is also a very cost-effective way for people to get help and support as they are placed on long waiting lists, told there is no room for them in other programs, and are basically left on their own. It is a place to go that is not a hospital, not a clinic and where people can get support on a short term basis that will allow their recovery to continue without having to access more intensive, more expensive and less effective services.

Please pass LD 540