



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

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**Testimony in Support of LD 291**

**"An Act to Support Young People Affected by Substance Use Disorder"**

**Sponsored by Representative LaRoche**

April 10, 2023

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed 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 support of LD 291, "An Act to Support Young People Affected by Substance Use Disorder." As you've already heard, the sponsor's amendment directs the Department of Health and Human Services in conjunction with the Department of Education to convene a working group to study the feasibility and issues related to establishing a recovery high school in the state.

According to the Association of Recovery Schools, recovery high schools are secondary schools designed specifically for students in recovery from substance use disorder or co-occurring disorders. These high schools meet state requirements for awarding a secondary school diploma, while also requiring the student to be working a program of recovery from substance use or co-occurring disorders as determined by the student and the school. Additionally, recovery high schools provide support for families learning how to live with and provide support for their teens in recovery.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, more than 341,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 17 enter addiction rehabilitation programs each year. National research shows that most "traditional schools" are not equipped to handle students in the early stages of sobriety. In fact, 8 out of 10 students who return to their previous schools experience a relapse within a year.

Other states are experiencing measurable success with recovery high schools but before we can understand what role these innovative schools may play in our state's continuum of care, we should conduct a study. I urge committee members to vote ought to pass on this important piece of legislation. Thank you and I'd be pleased to answer any questions you have for me.