



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 1236

" An Act to Increase the Provision of Children's Behavioral Health Services in Rural Areas and to Provide Support for Families of Children Receiving Services"

Sponsored by Representative Madigan

April 10, 2023

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. 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.

We support LD 1236 and thank Representative Madigan and the cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward. This proposal would add several different ways to expand access to treatment services to children in rural areas of Maine.

First, LD 1236 would establish reimbursement rates for providers of behavioral health services to children in families in rural areas involved in the child welfare system. The rural reimbursement rate would be sufficient to allow for the additional travel time required to serve children in rural areas.

Secondly, this proposal would offer grants or other incentives to children's behavioral health providers to expand programs into rural areas and serve children in families involved in the child welfare system.

And third, it would not only direct the department to establish a method of reimbursing providers of services to families involved in the child welfare system to meet together and coordinate services for each family. It would also mandate that the Department shall fully implement the family team meetings plan that is established in the Maine Family First Prevention Services State Plan. The department is directed to develop training for child welfare staff to act as neutral facilitators. The department is directed to ensure that all providers of services to families involved in the child welfare system participate in family team meetings.

One of the reasons that home and community services are so hard to access in rural areas is that provider travel is not a billable activity. In order to make the reimbursement rate work economically to sustain a program, agencies are forced to limit the distance that a clinician or Behavioral Health Professional travels to provide services. This has left many of our rural areas without access to these home and community-based services.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have for me and to bring any other information you need for the work session on this bill.