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Testimony of Deborah Hagler MD, MPH on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in Favor of LD1305 Resolve to Design and Implement a Community Based Model of Care for Adolescent Mental Health

Good morning, Senator, Baldacci and Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Dr. Deborah Hagler. I reside in Harpswell. I have practiced general pediatrics for over 25 years in Brunswick and I am the immediate past president of the Maine Chapter of The American Academy of Pediatrics I am offering testimony in favor of LD 1305.

The Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is the professional organization representing Maine's pediatricians. The Maine AAP believes that all children and adolescents deserve access to quality mental and physical healthcare and that this is a sound investment in the future of families and our communities.

Most of us have an ideal vision that involves enjoying our children as they grow up at creating memories in the community, they grow up in. However, many families of youth with severe mental illness and cooccurring substance use disorders may struggle to realize this ideal because these children require high levels of care often necessitating inpatient services and residential care. It is estimated that up to 60% of youth admitted with substance use disorders have a co-occurring mental illness. Upon discharge from this type of care, these youth must have coordinated connection to evidenced based care available in their communities or within reasonable distance to make a smooth transition home. However, these supports can be tremendously challenging for families to find. Many youths with these complex needs often will be involved with both child welfare and/or the juvenile justice system. As noted in a 2020 review of Maine's Juvenile Justice system- a key ongoing need for this population is to "develop a robust continuum of community-based services by developing an ongoing mechanism to provide flexible funding for community-based services and supports".

Whether or not youth with complex behavioral and mental health needs are involved with juvenile justice, care for this population in the community remains an enormous challenge. Identifying evidence-based community services and providing the necessary Mainecare funding to keep these programs operational is key to supporting these youth. LD1305 asks DHHS to create a plan for community-based treatments and programs to support youth with complex mental health and substance use needs utilizing the most evidence informed options available and identify the appropriate Mainecare rates to support this system. The Maine Chapter strongly encourages the support of these efforts and urges passage of LD1305.

1.[Urban Institute Data Snapshot of Youth Incarceration Maine -2020](#)

2.Center for Children's Law and Policy et al. (2020). Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment