

April 25, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Melissa Skahan, and I am the Vice President of Mission at Northern Light Mercy Hospital and serve as Executive Director of McAuley Residence in Portland and Bangor. I testify today with enthusiastic support for LD 1116 - An Act to Provide Rural Sober Living Housing for Mothers. For more than a decade, I have had the privilege of overseeing McAuley Residence, a two-generational program with sober housing for families affected by substance use disorder. We provide both sober housing and intensive services that allow women and their children to stabilize, reunify, and ultimately launch a new highly productive and healthy life. With housing, basic needs, and seamless access to treatment and services, women can commit to their health, their recovery, their children, and their families' future.

The McAuley Residence model continues to produce consistent and remarkable outcomes with 78% of participants remaining in recovery. This is influenced by comprehensive programming, proven structure, and expert staff. Participants access physical, mental, and oral healthcare, receive substance use disorder services and treatment and participate in both group and individual parent coaching. They commit to apartment checks, curfews, and random drug checks. College courses and career coaching are offered onsite. Children have access to quality childcare and early education learning opportunities. Family reunification occurs in partnership with Child Protective Services once readiness is demonstrated.

Without sober housing, women are often forced to choose between treatment, sober living, and their children. Families remain in unsafe environments and remain locked in a cycle of generational addiction and poverty. They remain users of high-cost services such as Child Protective Services, Department of Corrections, Emergency Services, and acute health care services. Demand for access to McAuley Residence far outweighs our current capacity. We often receive 3-5 calls per day in both Portland and Bangor from women seeking access to the program. The McAuley Residence model is proven to break the generational cycle and allows women to settle into evidence-based treatment, continuous capacity building, productive engagement, and participation in community. LD 1116 provides expansion opportunity which serves Maine and potential families well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Melissa Skahan
Vice President, Mission Integration
Northern Light Mercy Hospital
175 Fore River Parkway
Portland, ME 04102