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*The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers*

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Testimony in Opposition to LD 1596  
**An Act to Facilitate the Creation of an Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court**

Sponsored by Senate President Jackson

4.25.2023

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I am Malory Shaughnessy, a Westbrook resident, and the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's safety net community-based mental health and substance use treatment providers. 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 favor of LD 1596 An Act to Facilitate the Creation of an Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court. This bill appropriates ongoing funds to establish one Assistant District Attorney position to facilitate the creation of a drug treatment court in Aroostook County.

Maine currently operates Adult Drug Treatment Courts in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Hancock, Penobscot, Washington, and York Counties. As an alternative to incarceration, drug courts reduce the burden and costs of repeatedly processing low-level, non-violent offenders through the nation's courts, jails, and prisons while providing offenders an opportunity to receive treatment and education. Individuals in the judicial system who are at least 18 years of age, have a substance use disorder and a significant risk of future criminal conduct without intervention, and a poor prognosis for successful treatment without supervised intervention may be admitted to a drug treatment court program.

Entry into a drug treatment court is strictly voluntary. Components of the treatment involve intensive judicial oversight, comprehensive and individualized substance use disorder treatment plans, community supervision, and drug testing, among other things.

These Adult Drug Treatment Courts are important to our State given the scope and growth of substance use disorder throughout all parts of Maine, both rural and urban. We know from research that incarceration is not the best way to deal with an individual's underlying substance use disorder, and Adult Drug Treatment Courts are an effective way to keep individuals out

of jail and help treat the underlying issues that may have resulted in them ending up in the criminal justice system in the first place.

In the long run, such an approach saves money, and saves lives. Recidivism drops, on average, by 38%-50% among adult drug court participants, according to a review of 154 evaluations.<sup>1</sup>

The Alliance supports this first step towards creating a Drug Court in Aroostook County. We know they can be very successful if designed well and supported fully. Please vote Ought to Pass.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/Assessing\\_Efectiveness.pdf](https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/Assessing_Efectiveness.pdf)