

Testimony in Support of L.D. 1596 “An Act to Facilitate the Creation of an Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court”

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Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jamie Corbett. I am a resident of Marshfield, Maine. I am a Master Clinical Social Worker – Clinical Conditional, a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, a Certified Clinical Supervisor, and a mother in long term recovery. I have worked within a Treatment and Recovery Court team for eight years. I have thirteen years’ experience working as an addiction counselor, sixteen years of sobriety, and twenty-one years of recovery experience. I have worked with and known many individuals impacted by substance use disorder whose symptoms have led to intersecting with the criminal justice system including myself. I am testifying today in support of L.D. 1596, An Act to Facilitate the Creation of an Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court.

There is no dismissing the enormous need in the state of Maine to help those suffering from substance use disorders. While addiction for many started as a choice the subtle gradual chemical changes that occur in the brain lead to automatic compulsive use that controls an individual life. I have never evaluated an individual with substance use disorder who reported they began using due to wanting to be an addict or a criminal but rather that substance use was normalized, often prescribed, and available within their communities. Individuals with substance use disorder suffer from a chronic health condition not unlike hypertension and diabetes. We didn’t know scientifically when the Nixon Administration waged the War on Drugs, that drug use isn’t a moral failing but a chronic relapsing disease. Addiction like many other chronic health conditions can be managed and remission obtained with access to treatment and support services.

Treatment and Recovery Courts use evidence-based practices to treat addiction. Unlike standard outpatient treatments utilizing evidence-based treatments, Treatment and Recovery Courts also provide social learning, re-enforcement of treatment concepts and learning, and accountability to engaging in treatment. I have had the privilege of watching Treatment and Recovery Courts change lives and support individuals in obtaining and maintaining long term recovery. An evaluation of Maine Treatment and Recovery Courts conducted in 2020 leaves no room for debate on the cost effectiveness and treatment effectiveness of Treatment and Recovery Courts verse the traditional methods of incarceration or probation alone. This evaluation points out two hundred- and fifty-eight percent difference between recidivism rates of individuals participating in these programs verse probation alone, decreased mortality rates, and a cost savings of twelve percent for each person which can rise to as much as twenty-eight percent saving when recidivism rates are also taken into account.

As an individual who didn’t get the opportunity to engage in a Treatment and Recovery Court when my own addiction led me to intersect with the criminal justice system, I often find myself wondering how my own recovery path would have been different had I been given this opportunity to receive a hand up verses handcuffs. I wonder if I would have been able to recover without the trauma of homelessness and loss of guardianship of my eldest son. Despite not being able to access this hand up in my own recovery process I was able to find recovery and maintain long term sobriety. I live a life beyond

my wildest dreams today, where stakeholders in my community respect my assessment and treatment recommendations and together, we help individuals arrest their addictions and become contributing members of our community. Therefore, I have am testifying in support of L.D. 1596, An Act to Facilitate the Creation of an Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court.