

April 26, 2023

Testimony In support of LD 291: *An Act to Support Young People Affected by Substance Use Disorder*

Good day, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I am offering this written testimony in support of LD 291, “An Act to Support Young People Affected by Substance Use Disorder”. My name is Greg Bowers, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Day One, an organization that has provided substance use and mental health treatment to adolescents and families in Maine for well over forty-five years. Throughout much of its history, and continuing today, Day One has provided residential treatment for adolescent boys and girls suffering from acute substance use disorder. Currently we are the only provider in the State offering this level of care for young people. Day One knows firsthand from many years of experience, what types of supports are needed to give youth suffering from acute substance use disorder the best chance at long-term recovery.

Almost always, long term recovery from substance use disorder at any age is a nonlinear, iterative process that is highly specific to the individual. Recovery for young people can be even more complicated given that youth tend to be less motivated to change, have lower problem recognition and acceptance, and often enter treatment because of external reasons (someone is making them go). Relapse in this population can be very high. One study found that “among youth treated for alcohol or drug problems, one third to one half are likely to return to some drug use at least once within 12 months following treatment”. (1) Research also shows that “continuing care, or aftercare, for adolescents also has been repeatedly shown to reduce the likelihood of relapse and enhance the maintenance of treatment gains”. (2)

Recovery high schools have proved to be an effective form of continuing care in many parts of the country. Recovery High Schools are secondary schools designed specifically for students in recovery from substance use disorder or co-occurring

- (1) Gralla CE, Joshi V, Hser YI. Effects of comorbidity on treatment processes and outcomes among adolescents in drug treatment programs. JCASA, 2004: 13
- (2) Whitney SD, Kell JF, Myers MG, Brown SA. Parental substance use, family support and outcomes following treatment for psychoactive substance use disorders. JCASA, 2002: 11



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disorders. Given the large need for this level of support in the client's Day One serves, our Agency has explored the feasibility of introducing such a model in our own State as a potentially critical component of an effective continuum of care. As part of this exploration, we visited several such programs and have found that they can be structured and operated very differently from each other depending on available community resources, population demographics and state goals / standards. Much can be learned from these very impressive schools.

Day One strongly supports the notion of a broad based, comprehensive study of recovery high school models and their potential value in serving youth in recovery from substance use disorder – particularly in such a rural State as ours. Day One has no doubt as to the need for this level of support, and is more than willing to participate and assist in any such effort.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Respectfully Submitted

Gregory Bowers
Chief Executive Officer