

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of LD 1506, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Study the Scarcity of Licensed Clinical Behavioral Health Professionals Across the State”

Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Sarah Calder, Senior Government Affairs Director at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1506, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Study the Scarcity of Licensed Clinical Behavioral Health Professionals Across the State.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a continuum of health care services to communities throughout Maine and New Hampshire. As part of our vision of “Working Together so Our Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth provides a range of behavioral health services throughout our footprint through Maine Behavioral Healthcare (MBH). These range from community based outpatient therapy, medication management, substance use treatment and care management to inpatient treatment in four community hospitals and Spring Harbor Hospital.

Like behavioral health care providers across the country, MaineHealth is facing an extreme shortage of behavioral health clinicians and this is shortage is negatively impacting access to care. In fact, MBH was forced to deny 45% of outpatient therapy and 41% of outpatient psychiatry referrals due to a lack of capacity in 2022. MaineHealth is currently recruiting for over 60 social workers. These positions are open, on average, for 191 days or over half a year before a candidate is hired.

Without sufficient access to community behavioral health services, like social work and therapy, a greater demand is placed on more intensive levels of care. In fact, every day people with behavioral health needs, particularly children, languish in hospital Emergency Departments for days and weeks, and many community-based services maintain long waiting lists or are simply non-existent. Just in the past year, 861 children languished on average for 7 to 10 days in Emergency Departments across the state, depending on the level of care they needed.

With that said, we support the creation of the stakeholder group formed by LD 1506 to study the barriers related to training and recruitment of clinical behavioral health care providers, and very importantly, the number of additional

professionals needed to meet the current behavioral health needs of Mainers. We would welcome the opportunity to serve on the stakeholder group and identify a comprehensive plan and potential policy changes that could help us meet the behavioral health needs of our communities.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

