



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of LD 1719

“An Act to Establish Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers”

Sponsored by Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross

May 3, 2023

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Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Malory Shaughnessy, and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community-based mental health and substance use treatment providers, providing services to over 80,000 Maine men, women, and children. 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 support of LD 1719, “An Act to Establish Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers.” The Alliance thanks Speaker Talbot Ross for bringing this bill forward. Substance use disorder treatment centers offer individuals struggling with addiction a safe and supportive environment to receive the care and resources they need. We do not have nearly enough of these centers in Maine. These centers will provide evidence-based treatments such as behavioral therapies, medication-assisted treatment, and coordination with services after treatment.

An additional extremely important piece of this proposal is the inclusion of medically managed withdrawal beds. Formerly referred to as "Detox Beds" this service for substance use disorder is a critical component of the continuum of care for our community members suffering from substance use disorder, including not only opioid disorder but alcohol use disorder. Medically managed withdrawal is the process of safely and gradually removing substances from an individual's body. Withdrawal from drugs or alcohol can cause severe physical and psychological symptoms, and in some cases, it can even be life-threatening. It is often the first step in addiction treatment, and it can be a challenging and uncomfortable process.

There are not enough medically managed withdrawal beds in Maine. In fact, advocates on the front lines of the opioid epidemic can spend their entire days just calling – and calling and calling again -- to find a bed. And then there's the issue of paying for the service. These services can be costly, making them inaccessible for some individuals.

The need for MaineCare-covered withdrawal beds and treatment services for substance use disorder cannot be overstated. That is why the Alliance was pleased to see that this proposal requires at least 40% of the occupancy to be available to individuals with MaineCare. The current severely limited number of MaineCare-covered substance use disorder treatment services represents a profound barrier to recovery.

More treatment centers are badly needed across our state and MaineCare-covered withdrawal beds and other treatment services will allow individuals struggling with SUD and AUD to access the care they need to begin the process of recovery. I urge committee members to support this important proposal. Thank you.