



**Written Testimony of Leslie Clark  
In Favor of LD 1719:  
An Act to Establish Substance Use Treatment Centers**

Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 1719

May 3, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Leslie Clark. I am a person in long-term recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) and serve as the Executive Director of Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC). I am speaking to you today on behalf of PRCC in favor of passing LD 1719.

There is a dire need for more treatment beds with medically managed withdrawal in our state. According to our state's online database, Maine Drug Data, 4,672 Mainers lost their lives due to pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical drug overdoses between 1997 and mid-2020. From 2021-2022, approximately 1,352 fatal overdoses were reported in Maine. And these numbers do not include the huge number of people who die from alcohol related causes. The data reflects what we already know to be true. Our friends and family members are dying at rapid rates and there needs to be more beds available to help people safely withdraw from harmful substances and begin their journey to recovery.

The lack of accessible treatment options for SUD is one of the top barriers for Mainers seeking help. The journey to finding and sustaining recovery often requires medically managed withdrawal aka "detoxification". Many people cannot stop using addictive substances without medical help, and withdrawing from substances like alcohol and benzodiazepines can potentially be fatal without medical supervision. Following detoxification, individuals need additional support through recovery support services, inpatient treatment, intensive outpatient programs (IOP), recovery residences, recovery community centers, and more. The lack of treatment facilities with detoxification services is a gaping hole in the continuum of care.

If passed, LD 1719 will add at least 20 treatment beds that will include medically managed withdrawal services and the coordination of services post-treatment. Importantly, LD 1719 requires that a portion of the beds in the treatment centers must be open for individuals with MaineCare. This requirement is critical to removing cost as a barrier to treatment.



We know that the window of time in which a person with SUD has a moment of clarity and seeks help is often short. When a person with SUD decides they are ready to seek recovery, it is important that treatment beds are readily available before their resolve subsides. Increasing the number of treatment beds in Maine will save lives, connect more people to recovery resources, and decrease the gap in the continuum of care for SUD that currently exists in Maine.

We know that recovery from SUD is a reality for 26 million Americans. Our hope is that this legislation will give more Mainers the chance to find recovery, more families the chance to be reunited, and more communities the chance to be recovery-ready. On behalf of PRCC, I strongly urge this committee to vote ought to pass LD 1719.

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