



May 3, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Suzanne Farley and I am the Executive Director of Wellspring. We are located in the greater Bangor area and provide co-occurring capable, trauma-informed Residential and Outpatient Substance Use Treatment and Mental Health Services. I am here today to speak in support of LD 1719, "An Act to Establish Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers. Thank you to Speaker Talbot-Ross for submitting this legislation for consideration.

Wellspring supports strengthening the Statewide continuum of care for individuals with alcohol and substance use disorder. Centers that provide residential treatment, including medically supervised withdrawal programs (detox) are a critical part of our care continuum. Detox programs such as the one Wellspring operates at New Horizons provide a critical first step for individuals who are ready to get help. Its important also to realize that while withdrawal management may be enough for some people, many people need additional support and treatment to manage their disease depending on the length of time and types of substances they have been consuming. Detox is the first step, and a critical step. Maine does need more programs for withdrawal management, but it also needs more residential treatment for those coming out of the detox programs. Ultimately funding to look at the entire system of care. Presently, Wellspring has 71 people on our residential waitlists. While they wait, they flounder. Some of them die.

Yes – we support this bill, it is vitally important, but I urge this committee to consider the whole continuum of care for people with substance use disorder and of course, co-occurring mental health needs. This bill also identifies funding a 24/7 receiving center with the hope of getting people into a higher level of care. Wellspring supports this proposal but would like to emphasize that the current system of care in inadequate. The number one issue our discharge staff at New Horizons worry about is next steps. Getting the individuals into the next identified level of care based on their individual assessment is necessary to facilitate sustained recovery. Due to our current underfunded system too many people are placed in a lower level of care while they wait for beds to open up. While a lower level of care is better than no care it creates a back log of need. The State needs more short -term and long-term residential treatment beds, especially for low-and moderate income individuals. As of today, Wellspring has 71 people on our residential wait list. Many of these people are also on waitlists in other programs hoping that a bed anywhere in the state will open up.

I urge the committee to consider passage of this legislation but also to look at the whole continuum and ensure that funding exists to fully fund our system of care.

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