

Testimony IN FAVOR of LD 1714:
An Act to Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers

May 9, 2023

Committee on Taxation
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation:

My name is Kyle Leathers and I have lived in East Millinocket for most of my life. I have lost family members and friends to substance use disorder and over the past several years I have worked with others in the Katahdin Area to increase the number of resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery from this terrible disorder. I could not be more supportive of the idea of having a consistent source of funding for the important work done at recovery centers throughout the state.

I've seen the harsh effects of economic decline and poverty in our area, which has unfortunately included an increase in substance use disorder. Even before that, we witnessed people who worked in the paper mill or in the woods become addicted to opioids after having them prescribed for pain from on-the-job injuries. I often wonder how many of them would still be with us today or would have found recovery sooner if they had something like a recovery center to support them as they struggled.

There is a common theme when I talk to recovery center directors, employees, and volunteers: we wish we could have a better guarantee of funding. LD 1714 helps solve that problem. It is much more cost-effective to spend money directly on helping people reach recovery than to continue to spend that money criminalizing substance use disorder. There is no other type of organization in Maine that provides the necessary social space for those who are stigmatized as "addicts" and often ignored. Recovery centers provide a way for those with substance use disorder to create a new sense of community and purpose...and it's been working! Thousands of people have found recovery through services provided at recovery centers in Maine.

I want to encourage the members of the committee (and everyone else) to take an hour and visit your closest recovery center. I can't begin to describe the feeling you get after seeing and hearing the success stories of those who are in recovery. It's a celebration of fortitude and an inspiration to see so many people in recovery doing everything they can to help others stay on the path of sobriety. These people are our family, our friends, our coworkers, and our neighbors. No matter who they are, they are fellow human beings that deserve our support when they need it most.

I applaud this effort to fund recovery centers and I ask that you please support LD 1714.

Thank you,

Kyle Leathers
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