

To the State House Taxation Committee:

I am writing today in support of LD 1714, An Act to Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers. You will hear testimony today mostly from the people who desperately need these services--those who suffer from Substance Use Disorder (SUD). I wish to highlight my own personal experience with two Recovery Community Centers.

I am the mother of an adult son with a decade long history of Opioid Use Disorder. When he first asked for my help with his addiction I went into panic mode, trying every avenue to get my son the services that would help him get into recovery. My first visit to the Portland RCC was in November 2020 during the height of the pandemic, and I was given information and resources to help my son and myself. I also received a follow up call to "check in on how I was doing"! That impressed me-- Someone out there cared!

Although I knew nothing about resources at the time, I have since been able to educate myself about this terrible medical crisis and to understand that there are very few resources in Maine to tackle this crisis unless you have good private insurance or can take out a second mortgage on one's home! Most Maine families do not have access to those resources themselves. What else could I do for my son? The answers did not come easily. Things seem to have shifted quite a bit in 2023. It is because of the work of many people in the Recovery community to raise awareness of harm reduction, resources and on the ground, grassroots work.

I have had the pleasure of working with staff at both Portland and Bath RCCs. The need for these centers to continue and be of service to the communities in Maine is critical. And we need more of them! I understand there are 19 and another one opening later this year. If we are to make a dent in the number of opioid related deaths, we need to have a presence in every community. Every parent and grandparent in the State of Maine needs to know what to do if their child or loved one needs recovery services! No one should feel as helpless as I did when I first learned about my son's SUD. It takes a village to raise a child. It also takes a village to help with the crisis. The silent pandemic is now part and parcel of our communities. As a mom, I have met many other family

members around the state in all walks of life who have been affected. At the beginning of this year I was at a retreat for crafters and at my table of five women, four of us had been trained in how to administer naloxone. Four! And none of us knew each other—we were all from very different parts of the state. That’s when I realized that Substance Use Disorder is no longer a phenomenon. It is part of our everyday lives and we must have resources to combat the epidemic.

Last fall I had the great privilege to work with the Bath RCC when I attended a training there on how to begin a conversation about the stigma that families and people who use drugs experience in communities. It was a very eye-opening training. Later on, another parent and I took a “train the trainer” workshop on how to hold such meetings in our own communities to raise awareness. Earlier this year I had the opportunity through the BRCC to establish a support group for families of loved ones with SUD. We call it an “Affected Others support group and it meets once a month. If it weren’t for this Bath RCC, we would not have a safe space to meet and we would not have the resources to reach out to those who really need these services.

I consider myself to be a Recovery Ally, working in this field to help save lives, to educate communities on harm reduction and to offer hope for families that our children can and DO recover-- but they need a way. They need our help. I am happy to say now that my son is in early recovery and yet he had to spend a good year of his life in serious unsupervised detox without any availability to get help. Somehow he managed to find a way to get help on his own after several fits and starts towards sobriety.

Now we need to look at how the RCCs can be adequately funded. They need the State’s assistance by directing 12% of the adult use cannabis tax revenue. Based on last year’s tax revenue, this bill could provide approximately \$3.28 million dollars a year as sustainable funding for centers across Maine. The citizens of Maine need this help. If we don’t have access to those resources, we will surely not stem the tide of addiction and mental health crises. Our families will give up hope and their loved ones will continue to sink into deeper addiction. We can do better. I know we can and I trust that this Committee will see the power and effectiveness of what the RCCs are doing and help adequately fund their work.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

Laurie Haapanen

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