

Testimony in Favor of LD 1714:

An Act To Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers

May 5th, 2023

Committee on Taxation  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Joseph Hartel  
Bangor, ME 04401

Re: Passage of LD 1714

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

My name is Joni Winkler and I moved to Maine from Memphis, TN 5 years ago when I took a position as a Family Nurse Practitioner. At the time I was looking for a geographical cure for para-alcoholism, generational shame and codependency. I had been attending Al Anon and Adult Child of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Family 12 Step programs in Memphis. The position I took was in Urgent Care and I soon found out that I was running into the same psychological obstacles preventing health and wellbeing with my patients that I had in TN. I knew that if I could not help patients reach into their psyche that healthier lifestyle choices would not occur. Even more important to me on a personal level I had a forever all-consuming, innate to my soul a desire to help treat my schizophrenic brother James Winkler. It was at that time I decided to go back to school for Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner at Husson University.

While obtaining my Master's in Psychiatric Nursing we were required to obtain 180 clinical hours in courses pertaining to psychotherapy. To achieve this I started attending Narcotic Anonymous and Alcohol Anonymous meetings at the Bangor Area Recovery Network (The BARN) in Brewer, Maine. There is something to be said about walking into a 12 Step meeting – it is powerful and full of goodness. As mentioned above I was very familiar with 12 step programs but walking in The BARN's doors I finally felt like I belonged to this community and that it is part of my purpose. I also acquired friendships that supported my belief in the 12 step programs.

For my Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner requirements, I wrote a paper entitled The Lack of Mental Health Care in Rural Maine. It led me to start an Adult Child of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Family (ACOA) Program at The Bangor Area Recovery Network. There are very few ACOA programs in the state of Maine. I felt this is the way to not only treat the addicted person but the entire family. This program was founded 22 years ago and is in every state and across the globe. We have in person attendees and zoom attendees from Cairo, London, Australia, Canada, and all

over the United States. As of May 20<sup>th</sup>, we will be having our 2<sup>nd</sup> year anniversary of this group. I also am currently a member of the Board of Directors at the BARN.

Writing this letter is difficult for me for being a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner as well as a Family Nurse Practitioner I see the negative effects of Marijuana on people's health daily. I see how my patients who abuse and are addicted to Marijuana require sometimes twice as much psychotropic medication because the receptor sites to accept these meds may be taken by Marijuana. I see the negative effects on lungs, gastrointestinal, and increased anxiety caused by this drug. I see how when under the influence of Marijuana people can't make decisions let alone make good decisions for their health and mental wellbeing. I see how the use of this drug prevents patients from dealing with their emotions and problem solving. I worry how the use of this drug affects developing brains and decreases teenagers' IQ's if used before the age of 20.

To help combat the above problems I ask that the Bangor Area Recovery Network be allotted the funds to help support recovery of all addictions, mental illness, para-alcoholism, and codependency.

Truly.... I ask of you....help me help them.

Sincerely,

Joni L. Winkler, PMHNP, FNP