



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

**Testimony regarding
The Governor's Change Package for LD 258**

May 17, 2023

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Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Malory Shaughnessy. I am a resident of Westbrook and the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community-based providers of these important services, providing services annually to over 80,000 Maine men, women, and children. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in regards to the Governor's Change Package to LD 258.

The Alliance has both praise for several initiatives, and some concerns to share about this budget proposal. We also have some suggestions for funding that is truly needed to address the increased mental health crisis that is growing daily in this state, especially for our youth.

Members of the Alliance thank the Governor for fulfilling her pledge to provide funding for a Housing First Program in Section AAAA. Housing First programs recognize that stable housing is a prerequisite for effective psychiatric and substance use treatment and for improving quality of life. Once stably housed, individuals are better able to take advantage of wrap-around services – to help support housing stability, employment, and recovery. Without stable housing, attaining these goals is far more difficult.

Another important initiative within this proposal is the \$5.9 million in ongoing funding to establish a High-Fidelity Wrap-Around program for Medicaid-eligible youth to provide coordinated community services, training, and other supports for children with behavioral health needs and their families.

High Fidelity Wraparound uses an individualized, team-based, collaborative process to provide a coordinated set of services and supports. It is typically targeted toward children and youth with complex emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs, and their families. Throughout the process, youth and their families work with a care coordinator who convenes, facilitates, and coordinates efforts of the wraparound team. The care coordinator further helps the family navigate planned services and supports, including informal and community-based options; tracks progress and satisfaction to revise the plan of care as needed; and ensures program fidelity. You can find out more at the Federal Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse at <https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/programs/330/show>.

The main concern that the members of the Alliance want to share with the Appropriations Committee pertain to the large sums being added to the MaineCare Stabilization Fund in Section WWW. We would advocate that these funds be invested in the current biennium rather than be set aside for a later date. This budget proposes transferring over \$50 million into the MaineCare Stabilization Fund, when the fund is already at an all time high.

MaineCare is not only not “stabilized” yet post Pandemic, it is becoming increasingly unstable as the demand for mental health services rises in response to the Pandemic. This money should be expended now to address workforce shortages and meet the increasing service needs in our communities.

The Alliance would request that this committee consider moving some of this funding slated for the MaineCare Stabilization Fund into direct care now by including into the Change Package some of the unanimously passed legislative initiatives that will soon be landing on the Appropriations table.

These bills below have already passed unanimously (or nearly) through the Committee process and carry a total price tag of somewhere between \$10 – 15 Million (not all have a fiscal note attached yet):

- LD 472, An Act to Support Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Projects
- LD 1178, Resolve, to Reduce Barriers to Recovery from Addiction by Expanding Eligibility for Targeted Case Management Services
- LD 540, An Act to Establish Peer Respite Centers for Adults with Mental Health Challenges in Maine
- LD 997, Resolve, to Reduce Workforce Barriers for Mental Health Professionals in Maine
- LD 1355, An Act to Establish a Behavioral Health Employment Income Tax Credit for Student Loan Payments
- LD 1718, An Act to Encourage Participation in Maine's Essential Support Workforce Through Access to Higher Education

One last request would be in relation to the change package proposal to repeal the Service Provider Tax on health providers and remove all documented add-on amounts associated with the tax that are built into MaineCare reimbursement, effective January 1, 2025. The Alliance would like to see in writing a list of all of the MaineCare Sections and services that the DHHS considers to be subject to the Service Provider Tax. We would like to assure that we are in alignment before the process of removing it begins.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests for the health of our communities.