

Good Evening Members of the Maine Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

Social workers are committed to their careers, helping all individuals in communities throughout the State of Maine. Now more than ever is the time for Appropriations Committee Members of Maine to look toward the mental health future of our state and make a solid statement about their commitment to change by funding the Social Work Loan Repayment Program-LD 632.

The State of Maine's economy suffers when mental or behavioral health needs go unmet, so providing an answer to one of the root causes can provide a significant impact on hundreds of social workers currently struggling to pay their student loans while serving Maine's children, families, older adults, those with substance use disorders, or struggling with health and mental health concerns.

Social workers can be found in a variety of settings working within homes, schools, hospitals, prisons, government, social service agencies, mental health facilities, nonprofit organizations, and so many more. Student loan debt and the lack of competitive pay for social workers in Maine have forced many qualified would-be therapists to avert the field or move out of state. The behavioral health care crisis cannot be addressed if it lacks the professionals needed to do the work. These behavioral healthcare workers are so vital to the overall well-being of our society

Please vote in favor of and pass the Social Work Loan Repayment Program-LD 632. This bill is a path that will provide a sustainable financial future not only for those who live in Maine and are in need of mental health support but for the empathetic problem-solvers that are committed to providing support for the holistic health of All Mainers. While funding society's equitable programs is important, financially supporting those who do the work is vital.

Sincerely,
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