



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

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

~ Officers ~

Dave McCluskey, President

Community Care

Greg Bowers, 1st Vice-President

Day One

Bob Descoteaux, 2nd Vice-President

MaineGeneral Behavioral Health

Kara Hay, Secretary

Penquis CAP Inc.

Ellen Bemis, Treasurer

Aroostook Mental Health Center

Eric Meyer, Past President

Spurwink

~ Board Members ~

ARC at Mid Coast Hospital

Alternative Services, NE, Inc.

Androscoggin Home & Healthcare

Assistance Plus

Brighter Heights Maine

Catholic Charities, Maine

Co-occurring Collaborative

Serving Maine

Christopher Aaron Center

Common Ties Mental Health

Community Caring Collaborative

Community Concepts, Inc.

Community Health & Counseling

COR Health

Crisis & Counseling Centers

Crossroads Maine

Genoa Healthcare &

Telepsychiatry

Kennebec Behavioral Health

KidsPeace Maine

Maine Behavioral Health

Organization

Maine Behavioral Healthcare

Milestone Recovery

NFI North, Inc.

Northern Light/Acadia

Pathways of Maine

Portland Recovery Community

Center

Progress Center

Rumford Group Homes

Sunrise Opportunities

Sweetser

TriCounty Mental Health Services

Wellspring, Inc.

Wings for Children & Families

Woodfords Family Services

**Testimony Neither for Nor Against
LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of
the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical
Leave Benefits Program**

Sponsored by Senator Daughtry

May 26, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. 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 Neither For Nor Against LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program. This testimony is to share some concerns from the member providers of the Alliance and to present a possible solution for these concerns.

First, we want to clearly state that as employers, the member agencies of the Alliance value their employees and strive to provide the highest wages and most comprehensive benefit packages they are able to -- given current MaineCare rates.

So, the Alliance concern largely revolves around the mismatch between the added costs to providers to implement this program and the aforementioned MaineCare reimbursement rates. Most of the member agencies of the Alliance provide the bulk of their behavioral health services to MaineCare members or the uninsured, so their funding is very dependent on MaineCare rates, and contracts paid through the Mental Health and Substance Use Block Grants, which largely mirror MaineCare rates.

Through rate reform initiatives that were brought forward by the legislature, we have this year finally seen most behavioral health reimbursement rates begin to catch up to the inflationary impacts of the past decade, and a new baseline has been set that has begun to stabilize our system of care. **To have these increased costs hit these agencies now without a corresponding increase in the rates to cover them, we will see this stability stumble and again see service cutbacks and facility closures.**

The cost impacts are not simply the increase of the employer portion of the 1% of wages, which for some agencies could be a substantial amount. The cost impacts also include the overtime wages to cover absent employees in facilities that operate 24 hours a day. Due to the workforce shortages, it is near impossible to hire on new staff for a short term as the position is held for the absent employee. These losses must just be absorbed as there is no way for the agencies to independently increase the rates for these services, and the agency ends up having to reduce services or close down beds.

These agencies are the safety net for mental health and substance use services in our communities. They are providing critical services that the Department of Health and Human Services contracts them to provide for the health of our communities. Post pandemic, the demand for these services is growing and we simply cannot afford to see any more reduction in access to care.

Finally, a possible solution to these concerns. The Alliance proposes that a new *MaineCare Impact Statement* process be added to the legislative process, similar to the new Racial Impact Statement process. “Upon the request of a legislative committee such as this one, a commissioner or director of a state agency or the commissioner's or director's designee shall provide to that legislative committee the data, analysis and other information within the agency's possession necessary for the Legislature to prepare a [MaineCare] impact statement for legislation before that legislative committee or for legislation being prepared by that legislative committee.”¹ These impact statements would analyze the financial impact on the provision of MaineCare services and how much the rates must be increased to offset that impact so that needed services are not impacted.

This committee could take a step in that direction, by adding an amendment to this legislation calling for this analysis, so that the MaineCare impact cost could be added to the fiscal note of this legislation.

We would also propose one other amendment that would add a member to the Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Authority -- One member who is an employer in an agency providing services covered by MaineCare.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to present this ideas and concerns. I would be happy to provide additional information for the work session if requested.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes//2/title2sec201.html>