

January 17, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee

My name is Elayne Richard from Fairfield, Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 1975, An Act to Implement a Statewide Public Health Response to Substance Use and Amend the Laws Governing Scheduled Drugs.

Prior to retiring in 2017, I was a Children's Targeted Case Manager for various mental health agencies. It was in this role that I witnessed children, sometimes even before birth, ripped away from parents, especially moms, struggling with Substance Use Disorders. Regardless of how much consideration might have gone into foster placement or how much the foster parents wanted the placement to succeed, children always talked about wanting to be back with their moms no matter what. And those moms struggling with Substance Use Disorders wanted their children back and their families whole. Unfortunately, the system did not usually lead to successful reunifications; instead, it led to punishment of parents and shame and being left out on a limb for the entire family.

LD 1975 will address the personal needs of individuals affected by Substance Use Disorders and the need to keep families together while treatment is being sought and delivered by providing, and I quote "Individual health needs planning that prioritizes the self-identified needs of the person and may address the person's need and desire for substance use disorder treatment, treatment for coexisting health problems, housing, employment and training, child care and other services;

All people deserve to be safe and healthy and be part of the families they identify with. LD 1975 has the potential to save lives and keep families intact by focusing on proven solutions including access to childcare, access to affordable housing, access to mental health and Substance Use Disorder services leading to lives well lived and a healthier Maine.

Thank you for your support of LD 1975



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