
Police Department

January 22, 2024

Legislative Council
Committee on Health and Human Services
Maine State House
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Rotundo,

I am writing in support of LD 2105 to Protect and Enhance Access to Behavioral Health Services in Androscoggin County and surrounding communities and emphasize the importance of maintaining mental health services in our community.

The Lewiston Police Department, along with surrounding communities depend on the vital services offered at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center. St. Mary's is the cornerstone of our community's mental health services and have been engaged partners in dealing with our ongoing struggles with mental health and substance use disorder, of which is plaguing our community.

Our officers routinely transport patients to the St. Mary's Emergency Behavioral Unit for a variety of reasons, whether it be someone who is looking to harm themselves, trying to get sober, or placing someone in "protective custody" because they cannot safely care for themselves. St. Mary's BED commonly fills the gap between incarcerating someone and attempting to get them the treatment they need.

Years ago, when St. Mary's first opened their new "B.E.D" we were amazed at the space and resources offered in the secured unit. In recent years, it has become common to bring in a patient in to find that all the rooms and the waiting area filled with patients. A unit that was originally designed to care for a dozen patients has quickly grown to almost triple that amount. No matter how many patients they have, staff never refuse to find a spot for someone in need.

St. Mary's BED staff also works hand-in-hand with Lewiston Police Department "Project Support You" (PSY) team of behavioral specialist. PSY team members frequent the St. Mary's BED to follow up with clients and attempt to offer additional support/counseling to our vulnerable community.

St. Mary's Administration has also taken proactive steps to reach out to stakeholders, such as the Lewiston Police Department in an attempt to better serve the community. Quarterly, a group of St. Mary's Staff and administrators meet with representatives from the LPD to discuss ongoing issues in the community. I have found that St. Mary's Administrators are very receptive to ideas and concerns we bring to the table.

In short, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center's mission is to provide good healing care for the whole person in service to all in our communities, while offering a healing presence and guidance to support the well-being of patients, and their families. The Lewiston Police Department is extremely grateful and lucky to have such a great partner in St. Mary's Regional Medical Center and strongly encourage this legislative bill.

Lt. Derrick St. Laurent

Lewiston Police Department
171 Park Street, Lewiston, ME 04240