

Testimony from Tobin Williamson of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition regarding:  
**LD 2105: Resolve, to Protect and Enhance Access to Behavioral Health Services in  
Androscoggin County and Surrounding Communities**

Sponsored By: Senator Rotundo of Lewiston  
Public Hearing: January 24, 2024 at 10:00am

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health & Human Services:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Manager of Advocacy & Policy with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a network of around 100 member organizations working to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrant communities across the state. MIRC works to advance systemic changes in Maine through collaborative advocacy to ensure that voices and perspectives of the state's large, diverse, and growing immigrant communities are heard at the State House in Augusta, in the Halls of Congress in D.C., and in municipalities throughout Maine.

Senator Rotundo's proposed emergency legislation would have the state provide emergency funding to ensure behavioral health services continue at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center. On a personal note, I currently live in Westbrook, but I lived in Lewiston from 2021-23 and this is a community that remains near and dear to my heart. On a professional note, it is also home to some of the state's largest immigrant communities, and we at MIRC have so many essential relationships with partners and providers throughout Androscoggin County. It is the state's second-largest city and a service center for much of northwestern and central Maine.

For people within this large region of the state, St. Mary's is the only provider of acute behavioral health services. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic factors have dealt a harsh blow to the region, and St. Mary's could use some help to get through these tough times. Given that it is the state's second-largest city and such a pivotal service center region, we feel it is important for the state to recognize how vital it is that these behavioral health services continue. To quote the bill language directly:

*"St. Mary's is also a key provider of other services to underserved populations in the region that it serves and thus a crucial contributor to this State's efforts to address disparities in access to health care, yet these services also will be in jeopardy if temporary relief from the losses associated with providing acute behavioral health care services cannot be provided..."*

We join Senator Rotundo and the other Androscoggin County delegation co-sponsors in recognizing the urgent need for this legislation. Please pass LD 2105 to ensure essential behavioral health services will continue in Lewiston and Androscoggin County this year. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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