



February 20, 2024

Testimony in support of LD 2200 A Resolve to Attract and Retain Behavioral Health Clinicians.

Greetings Senator Baldacci, Representative Myer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I am Katherine Marble, resident of Auburn, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and Case Management Director at Health Affiliates Maine, a large statewide mental health agency serving over 10,000 Mainers with behavioral health diagnoses. To understand the mental health crisis we are in now, you can watch the local news, talk to your neighbors, or attempt to get a loved one mental health services. I have been a mental health professional for over twenty years and the last three years have been the worst I have seen access to care. At our agency alone, we have over five hundred people waiting for case management, one thousand children and adults waiting for outpatient services and two hundred people in need of psychiatric medication management services. The role of case management is to assist people in accessing the services and support they need to avoid costly hospitalization, homelessness, or incarceration. This role is difficult right now as so many of the services that case managers would link a client to have long waiting list and we are trying to stop our client's mental health from deteriorating. Agencies are desperately working to recruit mental health professionals—there are just not enough people to fill the need.

While I am thrilled to see that there are several initiatives to add mental health services that will reduce the gap in care between lower levels of care and hospitalization, I cannot help but wonder where Maine is going to recruit the professionals needed to make these programs successful when we cannot staff the programs that exist now. During the pandemic, mental health professionals left their profession. A greater number of professionals are ageing and will retire in the next five years. The legislature must act now with innovative initiatives to attract more mental health professionals from other states and encourage youth to get into the profession now. There are several bills in this session, that while alone will not solve the problem, as a package will be a strong start to ensuring that your constituents can access timely care. I encourage you to vote ought to pass for LD 2200 for Maine's future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KMarble".



PHONE: (207) 333-3278
TOLL-FREE: (877) 888-4304
FAX: (207) 333-3037



306 Rodman Road
Auburn, Maine 04210



PO Box 1150
Auburn, Maine 04211



healthaffiliatesmaine.com