



February 22nd, 2024

Good Afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and Members of the Appropriations Committee and Members of the Taxation Committee,

My name is Nicole Laverdiere. I am a Peer Support Specialist and Administrative Coordinator for WMARI - The Western Maine Addiction Recovery Initiative and The HILLS Recovery Center, a recovery community center opened by WMARI in Oxford County in early 2023. I am also a Mainer in recovery from Substance Use Disorder. I am here to urge support and funding for LD1714.

I never imagined myself working in a recovery center, just as I never imagined myself struggling with addiction. I had never heard of recovery centers until I was in residential treatment in 2021. When I learned about this concept - community centers focused on offering free support, resources, opportunities, and social activities to people with SUD - I knew it would greatly benefit my recovery. However, while the city where I was receiving treatment had a recovery center, I was soon going home to my small rural area in Western Maine.

Like an answer to my prayers, WMARI opened The HILLS Recovery Center in my hometown of Norway. I became involved and began working at The HILLS last summer. I am blessed to witness the benefits of recovery centers every single day, both in my own life and in my community. Recovery centers are like an open gateway into the world of recovery. No matter where someone is in their process of change, recovery centers welcome you with respect, loving kindness, and non-judgement. You are working with peers who deeply understand the pain you've endured, and offer proof that recovery is possible. This is an antidote to the feelings of worthlessness, loneliness, and hopelessness that come with active addiction. Recovery centers give people the resources and connections they need to get better. I know for a fact that our services have saved lives.

I can't convey with words how important it is to have a resource like this available in my community, and every Maine community. Sustainable funding is key to making this possible. Currently, recovery centers in Maine dedicate a lot of time to piecing together grants and donations to keep their doors open. Prioritizing the funding of LD1714 would allow us to focus on our primary purpose - supporting people with SUD and growing a strong, active recovery community. This is also a wise investment for the state of Maine, where almost everyone is impacted by the consequences of addiction in one form or another. Many issues caused by untreated SUD are also expensive for the taxpayer. Sustainable funding for recovery centers will save Mainers money in the long term. Most importantly, they will continue saving Maine lives and revolutionizing how we address the epidemic of addiction across the county.

Thank you very much for your time,
Nicole Laverdiere
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