

James Berry  
Portland  
LD 2214

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs: My name is James Berry, M.D. and I am from Portland. I am testifying neither for nor against LD2214.

I wanted to share my support for LD 2002 - An Act to Provide Incentives to Schools That Contract for Certain Social Work and Family Therapy Services. It had a favorable vote out of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee but has an ongoing annual fiscal note of 1,353,000. I wanted to encourage this Committee to consider funding this important initiative in the upcoming budget.

I practice in the field of addiction medicine. Addressing the mental health needs of teenage children is vital in preventing addiction as well as in helping children and their families deal with their current challenges. A counselor at my grandson's school in Gorham estimates that one-third of high school students in that district are in need of counseling services. Most school districts are not equipped to meet this critical need without outside financial and professional support. This issue has become more acute in the last few years with increasing mental health problems related to covid disruptions, the progression of the opioid epidemic, and the lack of counseling resources in many communities.

Thank you for your time. Please let me know if you have any questions.

James Berry MD  
43 Dennett St  
Portland, Maine 04102  
jameswesleyberry@gmail.com  
phone 615-5270