

February 27, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci and Representative Myer and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Victoria McCarty. I am a resident of Augusta. I am writing today to testify in favor of **LD 2214 “An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025”**.

I and members of my immediate family live with intergenerational mental health challenges every day. And because of this I am grateful for several proposals in the governor’s budget that are long overdue. One of the most immediate needs that is being addressed is the increase in mobile crisis services followed by the proposed expansion of crisis receiving centers. At present we have one receiving center in Portland, with a robust staffing pattern of peer support specialists. I would add that the addition of numerous peer support specialists as an integral part of these services would maximize positive outcomes and greatly improve the quality of life for those of us who would benefit from the variety of supports these programs can offer.

I would also emphasize how important peer respites are in the continuum of care. LD 540, which would allow for the return of peer respite programs to Maine after a long absence is sitting on the Appropriations table awaiting funding. I would strongly urge you to consider peer respite as an integral component of the overall crisis system. Here is a link to a directory that lists peer respites across the country and what they do: <https://power2u.org/directory-of-peer-respites/>

And the glue to sustaining these programs lies with investing in Workforce Development, Diversity and Education initiatives that will ensure ongoing choices of qualitative mental health services for all.

We can’t keep addressing these important issues in a vacuum. It takes all of us, peers, providers, legislators, and communities at large to work together to come up with innovative ways to implement and fund these proven programs for the mental health wellbeing of current and future generations to come.

In closing I ask that you support LD 2214 along with the items I have spoken about in this testimony.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely  
Victoria McCarty