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Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony regarding 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

Good afternoon, Senators Rotundo and Baldacci, Representatives Sachs and Meyer, and members of both the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Charlotte Warren. I am a resident of Hallowell and here to testify on behalf of my client, the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community based mental health and substance use treatment providers. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here to speak regarding the request for 32 more positions in the state police for a total cost of approximately \$10 million. The Alliance is in opposition to spending an additional \$10 million to create 32 additional positions within the Maine State Police. The Alliance requests that instead, you invest in the Maine Resiliency Package. I have submitted a copy of the Maine Resiliency Package with my testimony through the portal. The Resiliency Package is an action plan to provide timely and appropriate access to quality mental health services across Maine.

Mainers are in pain. When people are suffering, they articulate their pain in many ways – often in socially unaccepted ways. As the pain continues, the communication often gets louder, often more socially unacceptable – and sometimes that communication of pain becomes criminal. The Maine Resiliency package seeks to meet Mainers where they are and treat them – to heal the pain.

I would like to draw your attention to the most recent Deadly Force Review Panel report. The Deadly Force Review Panel was created in 2019 by the 129th Legislature. Its charge is to examine deaths or serious injuries resulting from the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers and identify compliance with accepted and best practices, as well as to comment on whether practices or procedures require adjustment or improvement.

“In its first report in January 2021, the Panel noted, after reviewing its first three cases, that there was “...a lack of community-based behavioral/mental health services that, had they been available and utilized, may have mitigated

the circumstances that culminated in the deadly force incidents.” In its second annual report in January 2022, after having reviewed a total of 10 cases since its

inception, the Panel said the following: “The Panel is hopeful that the Committee will seriously consider the recommendations in this annual report, particularly as they involve the critical need for additional resources for mental health services, especially in rural areas, to assist the community, law enforcement, and other first responders with the “typical individual” involved in an officer involved shooting...” In its third annual report in January 2023, the Panel reiterated the call it made in its second annual report “for additional mental health services, especially in rural areas, to assist the community, law enforcement, and other first responders with the individuals most often involved in officer-involved shootings ... While the Panel makes recommendations in this 4th Annual Report regarding policy, training, and equipment for law enforcement, it urgently reiterates its call for resources for mental health services.” See:

<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10716>

I would also direct your attention to the Maine Child Welfare Services Ombudsman 2023 report. The Ombudsman says (as she has stated in previous reports, “Continued support and **funding for an increase in the availability of services is necessary for the wellbeing of children and families, prevention of child maltreatment, and for the success of reunification of children with parents.** Essentially every case specific review completed this year by the Ombudsman detailed a case and a family that were negatively affected by a lack of services for both children and adults. Mental health services, substance use treatment services, trauma informed services, domestic violence services, housing, and transportation, are all examples of services that that are necessary for the safety and well-being of children.” See:

<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10525>

These are just two reports. There are many more. School administrators and teachers, courts, law enforcement officers, probation officers, and multiple state funded reports are all saying the same thing: we need increased access to mental health services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The Alliance urges the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee along with the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committees to reject the 32 new state police positions and instead use that \$10 million to care for Mainers by funding the Maine Resiliency Package.