

Jeanne Marquis
China
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Testimony to the AFA & HHS Committee on the Biannual Budget

February 14, 2025

Senator Routundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer,
and Honorable Members of the Appropriation and Health and Human Services
Committee:

My name is Jeanne Marquis from China, Maine. I am writing to you to express the need to allocate sufficient funds to Mental Health Services in the State of Maine in your Biannual Budget.

As someone who is currently a caregiver for a family member with severe mental health issues, I have seen firsthand the lack of resources and the lack of quality Mental Health care providers offered to those who are on MaineCare.

The Governor's budget allocates a disproportionate increase for law enforcement while cutting critical substance use and behavioral health services approved in last year's legislature session. Two of these cuts are the crisis receiving centers in Aroostook and Kennebec Counties – these centers are intended to connect people who are in immediate crisis with the care they need instead of cycling them through our state's jails as we have historically done.

Connecting my family member with quality mental health providers and programs has been a struggle. There is a shortage of therapists in our state and even fewer that are willing to take MaineCare. This shortage also means long waiting periods so that families such as mine have dealt with the stress of untreated mental illness in their households. A nearby crisis center during this waiting period would have made a world of difference.

I urge your committee to rethink your priorities in this Biannual Budget to emphasize Mental Healthcare. Each dollar spent on Mental Health will have a beautiful ripple effect by making families stronger and citizens more productive in our state eventually saving money in other areas. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Marquis