



New name, bigger impact. Pathways is now Clarvida

Testimony to the Maine State Legislature's Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine,
Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer,

My name is Kerri Bickford, and I am here representing **Pathways, now known as Clarvida**—one of the largest providers of children's mental health services and Home and Community-Based Treatment (HCT) in Maine.

I want to approach this issue from a different perspective.

Think about the immense effort and dedication it takes to pass legislation in this building. The countless hours spent in committee hearings, the rigorous House and Senate processes, and ultimately, the thorough review by this distinguished Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Imagine the sense of accomplishment when a bill not only passes but is also **funded**—a significant achievement and no small feat.

Now, imagine that after all that work, an unelected department—one that lacks the legislative authority to create policy—**unilaterally cancels your bill**. That is exactly what has happened with the **Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs)**. It is incredibly frustrating and deeply concerning.

COLAs were passed and funded **through the proper legislative process**. Providers like Clarvida budgeted accordingly, hiring staff and planning services to meet the urgent needs of Maine's children. However, despite the law being clear, the responsible department has **chosen to ignore statute** and make a policy decision **not to fund** these vital adjustments. This is simply unacceptable for those who depend on this funding—families, children, and the entire behavioral health community.

You, as elected representatives of the people of Maine, **hold the power to change this**. You have the ability—and the responsibility—to find a solution that upholds the integrity of the legislative process while ensuring that essential services remain accessible.

Furthermore, in **United States v. State of Maine**, it is explicitly stated that these COLAs **must** be paid to providers based on **current law**.

Part UU seeks to change that law, creating an unnecessary and harmful disruption to critical behavioral health services. If enacted, it will have **severe long-term consequences**, both financially and for the well-being of Maine's most vulnerable children, families and elderly.

We appreciate the commitment of many legislators who have already begun working on this issue in Augusta. Now, we ask you to **reject Part UU** and stand with us in ensuring that these vital funds reach the providers and communities that rely on them.

We are counting on you.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kerri Bickford

White Birch Advocacy

207-841-1181