

Abigail Zier

Regarding the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

3/10/2025

Hello, Chair Ingwersen and Chair Meyer, members of the committee, and fellow attendees. My name is Abigail Zier, a Master's in Social Work student at the University of Maine and a lifelong Maine resident. I am here today to testify in support of ***LD 258: the resolve to establish a program to recruit and retain behavioral health clinicians in Maine.***

Through my education and experience serving Mainers, I have seen first-hand how this workforce shortage is causing barriers to quality mental health care that our communities are struggling to address. Open positions remain unfilled for months, wait times for services grow longer, and existing providers are stretched beyond capacity. This crisis is not just a workforce issue—it's a barrier to essential care for families across our state. According to the [Maine Behavioral Health Access Point in Time Study](#), Maine has a high demand for behavioral health services with limited providers available to meet those needs, particularly in communities outside southern Maine.

High turnover, burnout, and low pay are driving qualified professionals out of the field and out of state. Behavioral health clinicians earn significantly less than other professionals with similar education and training, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified providers. I have personally witnessed these challenges, making me question whether staying in Maine as a clinician will be a sustainable option for my family after graduation. I chose to testify today because I believe this bill is a necessary step in addressing the clinician shortage and providing opportunities for those trying to stay in Maine and serve our communities.

The [Maine Center for Economic Policy](#) highlights that this workforce shortage is costing the state millions in long-term economic consequences. By investing in recruitment and retention incentives, we can make these positions more financially sustainable, ensuring that professionals like myself can remain in Maine to serve and support our communities—particularly in the rural areas that need it most. As someone who grew up in Maine, this bill is crucial in allowing me to build a future here—one where I can give back to the state that shaped me and continue serving my community for years to come.

Thank you, Chair Ingwersen, Chair Meyer, and committee members, for your time and attention to this critical issue. Supporting this initiative will help strengthen Maine's behavioral health workforce and retain professionals who support our families, schools, and communities every day. I appreciate your consideration and urge you to support this resolve.

Links to Supplementary Material

Maine Health Access Foundation. Behavioral Health Point in Time Study. February 25, 2021.
Available at: <https://mehaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2.25.2021-Data-Brief-Behavioral-Health.pdf>.

Maine Center for Economic Policy. Closing the Gap: Maine's Direct Care Shortage and Solutions to Fix It. Available at:
<https://www.meccep.org/maines-direct-care-shortage-and-solutions-to-fix-it/>.

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