



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am writing today on behalf of the CCSM to testify neither for nor against **LD 298: "An Act to Employ Mental Health Personnel Within the Maine State Police."**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

It is true that the Law Enforcement Community has rightly needed access to a more robust crisis system as they have been doing the lion share of the responses to the community. For this we say thank you!

Therefore, we ask that you consider the following important points:

Maine DHHS has embarked on a total re-design of the crisis system and for the first time ever in Maine we will have clinical and mental health peer support specialists co-responding teams throughout Maine. This will include a total overhaul of training for both the clinical and peer support specialist roles, in addition to their respective base training courses. The RFP (request for proposals) should be released anytime now in 2025. Here is a link to more information: <https://www1.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/DHHSs-Crisis-Service-Model-Presentation-January-2024.pdf>

If LD 298 is funded, these mental health positions would come from a workforce that is already very incomplete. Maine's provider community cannot fill many positions as it is so these clinicians would just leave a vacancy somewhere else. The funding for these positions is truly needed to support the infrastructure of the new crisis system.

And if we continue to fold mental health clinicians into law enforcement agencies, we will still have a law enforcement response to crisis needs. There are times when such responses are needed, but we hope we will see an individual's crisis as an opportunity for mental health support, which is best done by people with lived experience and their partners in a clinical roles. This makes for a win-win situation for everyone involved.

So, in closing, we would thank members of this committee for taking our points into consideration when voting on LD 298.

Sincerely,



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Simonne M. Maline

Executive Director