

Leah Maxwell
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LD 514

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Board Member, Wellspring
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Health and Human Services Committee
Augusta, ME

Chair Ingwersen, Chair Meyer, and esteemed members of the committee:

My name is Leah Maxwell, and I am honored to serve as a board member for Wellspring, an organization committed to providing continuum of trauma-informed substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health services to support people on their journey to recovery regardless of income.

When I was preparing for this testimony it was important for me to share the voice of real people impacted by Substance Use Disorder. This voice of an important person in my life, one of my family members in recovery, and I share his story with his permission.

“I was going to kill myself, either with drugs or without it. I was trying to figure out how to live life on a daily basis as a normal person, and was in and out of rehab and detox over 10 times. At the start of my recovery, Roland, one of the techs, came to talk to me while I was sitting in my room not wanting to go to group, do treatment or anything and was just sitting in my room signing. He asked me, “Have you ever thought about singing professionally? We’ve heard you from the desk and think you’re really good” He was in recovery and would come every day just to sit and talk to me and see how I was. He wanted to make sure that I was ok. Rehab is a place to get clean, it’s the people in the rehab that teach you to live. I know I’ve got plenty of drug time left in my life, what I don’t have is another recovery.” - CB

I am here today to voice my strong support for LD 514 Resolve, to Raise MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Detoxification Services for Substance Use Disorder Treatment, sponsored by Sen. Joe Baldacci. I urge you to take action in favor of policies that protect and empower individuals seeking substance use treatment and the agencies that serve them.

Wellspring, along with organizations like Liberty Bay Recovery Center, Wabanaki Public Health, and Milestone Recovery, plays a vital role in ensuring that people in crisis can access withdrawal management services and support. One critical example is Wellspring’s New Horizons program, which was the first medically supervised program exclusively serving low-income individuals with MaineCare as their insurer outside of Portland. This program was established through a community-led effort with allocated legislative dollars in 2016 and continues to provide life-saving care and support.

New Horizons and similar programs are staffed 24/7 with registered nurses and medical providers specifically trained in addiction medicine. In FY24, New Horizons’ 10-bed facility served 423 individuals, approximately half for opioid/fentanyl withdrawal and half for alcohol withdrawal. Many patients also struggle with additional substances such as benzodiazepines or xylazine, making medical supervision essential for safety.

Despite the critical need for these services, inadequate reimbursement rates threaten their sustainability. In 2024, the operating costs per bed per day were \$688, while MaineCare currently reimburses only \$403 per day. With increasing costs to pay for staffing, including overtime, this reimbursement rate is unsustainable. Like an emergency department, these facilities must have staff ready to provide care at all times, even when beds are not filled, and as my family member points out, it’s staff that makes a difference in the lives of the people we care about.

While progress has been made in addressing the overdose crisis, the risk of facility closures poses a significant threat. In January 2024 alone, there were 567 overdoses in Maine—51 fatal and 516 nonfatal. While this marks a reduction from January 2023 (which saw 801 overdoses, 54 fatal and 747 nonfatal), the crisis persists, and access to medically supervised withdrawal management services remains crucial.

I urge this committee to address the funding shortfall by increasing Mainecare reimbursement rates. Supporting this measure is not just about policy; it is about saving lives, ensuring access to critical services, and reinforcing our commitment to public health.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have and appreciate your dedication to addressing this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

Leah Maxwell, LCSW

Board Member, Wellspring