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The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony in Support of
Resolve, to Raise MaineCare Reimbursement Rates for Detoxification
Services for Substance Use Disorder Treatment – LD 514

March 10th, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Adam Bloom-Paicopolos. I am a resident of Wells and am proud to serve as the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine (the Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association representing Maine's community-based behavioral health agencies who provide much-needed mental health and substance use services to over 80,000 children, adults, and families annually. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in strong support of LD 514.

Maine, like many states across the nation, continues to face a devastating opioid crisis that has taken too many lives and affected countless families. Access to medically supervised withdrawal services - commonly known as detox - is a crucial first step in the recovery journey for individuals struggling with substance use disorders. These services provide the medical supervision and support necessary to safely manage withdrawal symptoms and begin the path to recovery.

Despite their critical importance, detoxification services in Maine are facing a severe funding crisis that threatens their very existence. Currently, MaineCare reimburses detox services at approximately \$403 per day, while the average cost of operating these specialized beds is nearly \$700 per day. This unsustainable gap of nearly \$300 per day is forcing providers to make impossible choices between continuing to offer these life-saving services at a significant financial loss or discontinuing them entirely.

While our state has made progress in increasing the number of MaineCare-covered detox beds, many facilities now face the risk of closure. Without immediate action, we stand to lose the limited capacity we have worked so hard to build, further restricting access for vulnerable Mainers in their moment of need.

This resolve directly supports the objectives outlined in the Maine Opioid Response: 2023-2025 Strategic Action Plan. Specifically, Strategy #24 calls for expanding the availability of medications for opioid use disorder, with special efforts to reach historically marginalized and at-risk populations. A key component of this strategy (item h) explicitly identifies the need to "increase the number of beds for medically supervised withdrawal (detox), including adequate workforce and reimbursement rates."

By increasing the MaineCare reimbursement rate to \$594.38 per day (which is tied to New Hampshire's Medicaid rate), this resolve takes a significant step toward making these services financially viable and sustainable, though it should be noted this amount still falls below the actual operational costs of approximately \$700 per day.

Impact on Maine's Most Vulnerable

When someone reaches out for help with addiction, immediate access to appropriate care can be the difference between life and death. Without adequate detoxification services, many individuals will be unable to access this critical entry point to treatment. This particularly impacts our most vulnerable populations, including those with limited financial resources who rely on MaineCare coverage. The current shortage of detox beds means that many Mainers must wait for services or travel long distances to access care - barriers that often result in continued substance use and increased risk of overdose. By strengthening our detoxification infrastructure through appropriate reimbursement rates, we can help ensure that help is available when people are ready to take that brave first step toward recovery.

Fiscal Responsibility

While this resolve does require additional investment, it represents sound fiscal policy. The costs of untreated substance use disorders are enormous - including emergency department visits, hospitalizations, involvement with child welfare and criminal justice systems, and lost productivity. By investing in proper reimbursement for detoxification services, we create pathways to recovery that ultimately reduce these societal costs while saving lives.

Conclusion

I respectfully urge this committee to support this resolve to increase MaineCare reimbursement rates for non-hospital-based medically supervised withdrawal services to no less than \$594.38 per day by January 1, 2026. This action is essential to preserve and expand access to these life-saving services for Maine people struggling with substance use disorders.

The decision before you is not just about adjusting a reimbursement rate - it's about whether we as a state will stand by our commitment to addressing the opioid crisis and supporting recovery. Our treatment providers are willing to do this difficult and essential work, but they cannot do so at an unsustainable financial loss.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon and for your consideration of this critical issue. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Respectfully,



Adam Bloom-Paicopolos, MPP
Executive Director