



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony in Support of
An Act Regarding Children with Behavioral Health Needs Awaiting
Placement in Residential Care Facilities – LD 791

March 24th, 2025

Good morning, 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 791, "An Act Regarding Children with Behavioral Health Needs Awaiting Placement in Residential Care Facilities".

Maine's behavioral health system is in crisis and nowhere is that crisis more visible than in the growing number of children stuck in emergency departments and other inappropriate settings due to the lack of timely access to residential treatment. These children and their families deserve a system that responds to their needs efficiently and compassionately. LD 791 represents an important step toward ensuring that children in need of higher levels of care receive timely and appropriate services.

The challenges addressed in LD 791 are not new— in fact they were central to the LD 2009 workgroup established last session. After months of deeply appreciated and meaningful collaboration across stakeholders and the Department, several recommendations were elevated from the workgroup. The proposed initiatives before you today in LD 791 represent some of those recommendations – with more to come in separately proposed legislation.ⁱ

This cross-stakeholder effort made it clear that Maine must improve placement coordination to reduce unnecessary delays, expand capacity of residential providers, and improve the availability and coordination of community-based services both as a first option or as step-down programs to ensure children and their families have access to the right level of care, at the right time, here in Maine. LD 791 builds on these recommendations by offering tangible policy solutions to improve access via crisis services and the timely development of a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF), updated emergency department rules, and the transparent sharing of key data pursuant to the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement.

Supporting LD 791 represents an important step towards timely placements for children in crisis and reducing the emotional and psychological toll of lengthy, unnecessary, and oftentimes traumatizing emergency department stays. This bill, when combined with both upcoming legislation elevating the remainder of the workgroup's recommendations on enhancing community-based services and stabilizing residential providers as well as initial steps by the Department to fulfill its Settlement Agreement obligations, would strengthen our state's entire continuum of care for our youth. Doing so ensures that Maine children can access care within their home state and communities, keeping them connected to their families and support networks rather than relying on out-of-state placements or languishing in emergency departments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this morning. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Bloom-Paicopolos', written in a cursive style.

Adam Bloom-Paicopolos, MPP
Executive Director

ⁱ Maine Department of Health and Human Services. *Report to the Legislature: Long Stays for Children and Adolescents in Hospital Emergency Departments*. January 2025. <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11366>