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I have worked as a school social worker in a middle school setting. I currently supervise clinicians providing school-based counseling in two school districts in Maine. We are only able to provide counseling to students who have MaineCare or third-party insurance. We often are unable to serve students with insurance due to their high deductibles. Students with no insurance are sometime serviced by our graduate students. The need far outweighs the resources and it is a challenge serving kids in the school setting due to a) often they are not available to be seen during the school vacations b) they can't be seen during field trips, assemblies, mandatory testing ... The cost to agencies is higher compared to traditional outpatient therapy. There are also mental health services/interventions that are not covered by MaineCare that would be helpful i.e. low barrier groups, consulting with teachers, providing services to children with no insurance, classroom observations...

The funding structure in this bill better supports the level of need compared to LD858. The number of mental health referrals and acuity is rising and the impact on a child's success educationally is significant. Being successful in education impact a child's success in adulthood: Independence, jobs, housing, relationships. This is a vital investment.