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Testimony of Representative Kristi Mathieson presenting

LD 882 An Act to Protect Communication with Providers of Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and honorable members of Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Kristi Mathieson. I have the distinct pleasure of representing the beautiful seaside community of Kittery, House District 151. I am here to present **LD 882 An Act to Protect Communication with Providers of Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support**.

I am a cosponsor of this important legislation and support the bill with a suggested friendly amendment. Due to the high level of stress our first responders encounter, support systems are critical now, more than ever. This bill includes CISM peer support and Peer Team providers in the definition of “health care,” which acknowledges the significance of psychological well-being for our first responders, and encourages access to the necessary resources for healing and recovery. Boots on the ground understand that these are two separate but equally important services. Both approaches are essential in addressing the mental health needs of our 1st responders and each serve distinct roles.

- **CISM** focuses on mitigating the impacts of traumatic events through structured interventions, often following specific incidents. It plays a pivotal role in addressing and processing the immediate psychological responses to trauma.
- **Peer Support**, on the other hand, embodies a more informal, ongoing relationship where members provide emotional and social support to one another. The peer support model is built on trust and understanding, as peers share similar experiences and can relate more closely to the challenges faced by one another in the fire service.

As you consider this important bill I ask that you consider an explicit clarification and recognizing the differences between CISM and Peer Support to better support our first responder work force. Thank you for your time.