



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify in support of **LD 1203, An Act to Provide Grants to Schools That Contract for Behavioral and Mental Health Services.**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

As of January 2025, 422 Maine children are on waitlists for behavioral health services and that is the youth that are on waitlists which we know is higher than this number. This number is more than a statistic, it represents hundreds of young people in need of support and care that they are unable to access.

The reality is that we need to increase our support for students, yet we are seeing a devastating loss of over 95 school-based clinicians due to funding issues between the last school year and this one. LD 1203 establishes a grant program through the Department of Education to help school districts contract with licensed behavioral health providers.

This bill would support early intervention and prevention, offer peace of mind to families, and strengthen community-based care networks.

As people with lived experience, we know how critical it is to get support early. We also know that mental health challenges, when left unaddressed, can derail not just a school year, but a life. Even though the focus of the CCSM is to advocate for adult systems issues we know without a doubt that we will support the youth of Maine so that they have a very different trajectory that we as adults have had and hope that with the supports for their challenges now will hopefully end in a different adulthood than we have experienced due often to the lack of the supports needed in our youth.

We urge you to **vote ought to pass on LD 1203** and ensure that every child in Maine has access to behavioral health care.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's youth.

Sincerely,

Simonne M. Maline

Executive Director