

Sarah Dyer
Restorative Justice Project Maine
LD 1266

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of LD 1266 and on the importance of including a Restorative Justice Professional as a stakeholder in the proposed Attorney General's multidisciplinary working group to develop a plan for expanding adult treatment courts.

I am a member of the District VI Adult Treatment Recovery Court Team and a Restorative Justice professional, employed by the Restorative Justice Project Maine. Treatment courts were created to address the root causes of criminal behavior, particularly addiction, which has long been linked to criminal activity. Across the country, treatment courts have demonstrated success in addressing this community need by focusing on rehabilitation and support, rather than simply relying on punitive measures.

Treatment courts have the capacity to make profound impacts on the lives of participants, their families, and their communities. However, the tools available to these courts are often limited. While treatment courts do encourage honesty and trust, they retain the power to impose punishment, such as jail time, for participants who relapse or violate court conditions. In many cases, jail time becomes one of the few tools available to motivate change, but it fails to address the deeper issues at play—issues that often lie outside the courtroom's control.

The treatment court is structured in a way that allows for significant interaction between counseling services and case managers, but there is limited engagement with other team members who hold the power to determine a participant's autonomy and freedom. This dynamic can reinforce a 'power-over' approach, undermining the essential trust needed between the participant and the team.

Restorative practices, on the other hand, provide a powerful framework to address systemic, institutional, and personal barriers to recovery by focusing not just on the individual, but on the entire treatment team and community.

I urge you to vote to pass LD 1266, a resolve directing the Attorney General to Convene a Working Group to Propose a Plan for Expanding the Reach of Treatment Courts, and I urge you to consider adding a Restorative Justice Professional to the Multidisciplinary Team list

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Dyer, Ph.D.