



April 15, 2025

Testimony Regarding LD1380: Resolve, Establishing the Study Group on Solutions to Address Maine's Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jeff Matranga, and I am writing in my capacity as the President of The Maine Psychological Association (MePA). MePA is a non-profit association which represents the 600+ psychologists and psychological examiners in Maine. Our mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting human welfare. Our membership consists of practicing psychologists, academicians, students, retirees, associates and affiliates.

We are writing to urge you to support LD1380, which will create a much-needed study group to assess the current state of Maine's behavioral health workforce and develop strategies to grow and strengthen it in the future.

As this Committee already knows, Maine is facing a behavioral healthcare workforce crisis. The number of people seeking behavioral health treatment far outweigh the number of behavioral health clinicians available to treat them. According to a recent report issued by the Maine Center for Economic Policy¹, there are approximately 8,800 clients waiting for mental health counseling from organizational providers, and these patients are waiting an average of 32 weeks to receive care. On average, 69% of clients wait for counseling from organizational providers for 10 months or longer, including 23% who wait for longer than 1.5 years. This is unacceptable and needs to be addressed in the short term to ensure the health and safety of all Mainers.

We hope that a study will spark meaningful, productive conversation and uncover unique strategies to provide better access to behavioral health resources. We also hope that MePA and its members can play a role in this study, as we bring the perspective of psychologists throughout the State of Maine who provide these critical services.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support for this bill and the resulting study.

Respectfully,
Jeff Matranga, President

¹ Maine Center for Economic Policy, "Closing the Gap: Maine's Direct Care Shortage and Solutions to Fix It." June 17, 2024.