



Testimony In Support of LD 1745: An Act to Stabilize Residential Treatment Capacity for Children and Youth in Maine
Submitted to the Committee on Health and Human Services
Date: April 28, 2025

Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Danielle Loring, and I serve as the Executive Director of Morrison Center. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 1745, legislation that is critical to stabilizing Maine's fragmented system of care for children and youth.

At the heart of any effective behavioral health system is a continuum of care - one that meets children where they are, supports them through acute episodes, and helps them rejoin their families and communities. While we all agree that children thrive best in their homes and communities, some require a higher level of support during periods of acute need. For these youth, residential treatment provides vital stabilization - a structured, therapeutic environment with qualified providers and around-the-clock care. Without these services, children are diverted into far more restrictive and costly alternatives that were never designed to support healing: emergency rooms, inpatient hospitals, hotels, or placements in out-of-state facilities.

Today, our system is at a breaking point. Despite having 181 licensed residential beds in Maine, only 126 are currently filled, while 76 children remain on waitlists - many in unsafe, inappropriate, or makeshift placements. An additional 66 children have been sent out of state for treatment, severing critical ties to their families, schools, and communities. Out-of-state placement does not support the least restrictive environment or allow for meaningful family involvement, community reintegration, or continuity of care - all core goals of residential treatment and long-term success. These placements fragment families, delay transitions to community-based supports, and disrupt children's education, often resulting in greater long-term needs and escalating public costs.

This situation is not the result of temporary misalignment; it is a reflection of a system in decline. Since 2007, Maine has lost over 460 residential treatment beds as providers face insurmountable funding challenges, workforce shortages, and unsustainable service models. At Morrison Center and across the state, programs have been forced to close not because of diminished need, but because of broken infrastructure and lack of investment. The burden of this failing system ultimately falls on children, families, and the public systems that must manage the fallout.

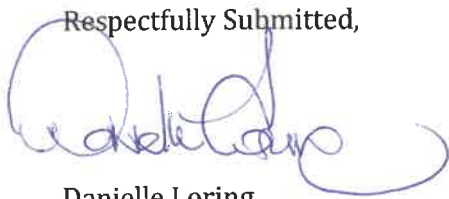
LD 1745 provides a vital, coordinated response to these challenges. It establishes legislative oversight when residential facilities close, ensures that service gaps are thoughtfully understood in real time, and creates a statewide needs assessment driven by the experts in this work - the providers and families within it. It also mandates a financial analysis of the hidden costs of emergency department boarding and out-of-state care, so that policy decisions can be based not only on values, but on sound economics. Crucially, this bill also invests in aftercare support and emergency funding for facilities on the brink, recognizing that sustaining our current infrastructure is just as important as building for the future.

We must view this legislation not as a stopgap, but as a foundational commitment to Maine's youth. Without a functional residential treatment component, the entire continuum of care collapses. A healthy system requires multiple levels of support with a clear framework and methodology - from community-based services to intensive short-term stabilization - and LD 1745 takes a vital step toward restoring that balance.

On behalf of Morrison Center and the many families and providers who have watched capacity decrease as needs continue to rise, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1745. This is not just a policy decision - the future of Maine's most vulnerable youth depends on it.

Thank you for your time and for your service. I am grateful for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of Maine's children, families and providers.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Danielle Loring', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Danielle Loring
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Danielle Loring
Scarborough, ME
LD 1745

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