



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

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Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and esteemed members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services 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 1589, “An Act to Improve Parity in Insurance Coverage for Outpatient Counseling Services in Maine”**.

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.

Outpatient counseling is often the first and most essential line of support for individuals living with mental health conditions. When people cannot access outpatient therapy, they inevitably utilize emergency rooms, inpatient facilities, or other crisis-level services that are both more expensive and more traumatic.

Even in Maine’s most populous counties, waitlists for outpatient counseling can stretch as long as six months. We hear from our peers across the state that this backlog is one of the most urgent and demoralizing barriers to recovery. It is an issue consistently captured at our forums and other events statewide.

If this bill helps reduce wait times and increases the availability of timely outpatient counseling, we absolutely support it. Payment parity helps retain providers and expand the availability of care in both urban and rural areas. Without steps like these, the workforce crisis will only deepen.

**The CCSM urges this Committee to pass LD 1589.** Our system must be built to support people when they ask for help, not only after they've reached a breaking point. Ensuring true insurance parity for outpatient counseling services is a critical move toward that goal.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to mental health equity in Maine.

Sincerely,

Simonne M. Maline

Executive Director