



*LD 1753: An Act to Establish the Upper St. John Valley Recovery High School Program*

May 1, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jon Reynolds, and I serve as the Center Director for the Maine Recovery Access Project (ME-RAP), a nonprofit dedicated to supporting recovery across the state, with a deep focus on youth empowerment, harm reduction, and equitable access to care. I'm here today to testify in strong support of the creation of the Upper St. John Valley Recovery High School.

At ME-RAP, we work with young people every day who are impacted by substance use—those who are in recovery, those who love someone in recovery, and those navigating complex life circumstances where substance use is present—through our three youth caucuses located in Washington, Penobscot, and Kennebec Counties. Through this work, we see firsthand the isolation, the stigma, and the structural barriers that too often prevent young people from getting the support they need to heal, grow, and graduate from high school.

That's why we believe that the opening of a recovery high school is not just timely—it's vital.

Some of you may remember our youth caucus' from a few sessions ago. They came before this very committee to share their stories and to advocate for the inclusion of Naloxone training in Maine high schools. Their testimony helped lead to the passage of LD 1315, which made that vision a reality. That moment wasn't just about legislation—it was about young people seeing themselves as leaders, as changemakers, and as worthy of being heard. But legislative wins alone are not enough.

Since the bill passed, young people from across Maine have been working hard to create a peer-to-peer naloxone training—led by youth, for youth. We're excited to share that this week, they officially launched the training and held their first session, with Bangor youth leading the way at the Bangor Region YMCA!

We need recovery spaces designed *for* youth and *by* youth. We need environments where education and healing are not treated as separate paths. The proposed recovery high school offers a bold model: one that integrates academics, supervised housing, structured recovery support, and workforce development in a region that has been deeply impacted by the overdose crisis.

At ME-RAP, our youth organizers have shown us time and again that when we trust young people, resource them, and give them a seat at the table, they rise. A recovery high school gives young people a chance to rise—and to do so in a place that honors their dignity, potential, and recovery.

I urge you to support a recovery high school in Maine and to help make Maine a leader in youth recovery education. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maine's youth.

Sincerely,

Jon Reynolds