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**Testimony in Favor of LD 1753:
An Act to Establish the Upper St. John Valley Recovery High School Program**
on behalf of Portland Recovery Community Center

April 30, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Kelly Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Leslie Clark, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Portland Recovery Community Center, a statewide leader in peer-led recovery support services. I am providing testimony in strong support of LD 1753, “An Act to Establish the Upper St. John Valley Recovery High School Program.”

This legislation represents a visionary step forward for Maine’s youth in recovery from substance use disorder and co-occurring conditions. It recognizes a truth that those of us working in recovery support have long known: sustainable recovery, especially for young people, requires more than treatment—it requires a supportive environment where healing, education, community, and personal growth are fully integrated.

Recovery High Schools are a nationally recognized model¹ proven to increase abstinence, school attendance, and academic success for students. Research shows that adolescents who attend Recovery High Schools after treatment are **four times more likely** to report complete abstinence from substances at 6-month follow-up, and they also experience significantly *less absenteeism* than their peers in traditional high school settings.² These schools offer the structure, peer support, and dedicated staff necessary to meet students where they are in their recovery journeys.

As it stands, Maine families seeking this type of educational recovery support must look out of state—most often to Massachusetts. This is unacceptable. Maine’s young adults have **an above-average rate of illicit substance use disorder** compared to national trends.³ Our state’s response must meet the urgency of this need with bold, evidence-based solutions.

LD 1753 will establish the first Recovery High School in Maine, offering supervised housing, integrated academic and recovery programming, and partnership opportunities with higher education. It reflects a commitment not just to recovery, but to the future success of some of our most vulnerable young people.

At PRCC, we are committed to advancing recovery-oriented systems of care that support youth. For our young adults, that system must include access to recovery-friendly education at the high school level. This pilot program is a critical and long-overdue component of that vision.



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I urge this Committee to vote ought to pass on LD 1753 and help position Maine to provide adolescent recovery support.

Thank you for your commitment to Maine's youth.

Sincerely,

Leslie Clark
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¹Peer Recovery Center of Excellence. (2024). *ARS Recovery Toolkit*. Peer Recovery Center of Excellence, University of Missouri – Kansas City, Association of Recovery Schools.

²Finch, A. J., Tanner-Smith, E., Hennessy, E., & Moberg, D. P. (2017). Recovery high schools: Effect of schools supporting recovery from substance use disorders. *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 44(2), 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2017.1354378>

³Coy, A., & Sugue, M. (2025, February 25). *Updated drug and alcohol statistics for Maine*. Addiction Group. <https://www.addictiongroup.org/maine/drug-statistics/>