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Commissioner



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5/19/2025

Senator Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1973 – *Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Study Oversight and Funding Structures for Recovery Residences and Resident Protections*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 1973, *Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Study Oversight and Funding Structures for Recovery Residences and Resident Protections*.

The intent of this legislation is to establish the Commission to Study Oversight and Funding Structures for Recovery Residences and Resident protections. This Commission would be required to evaluate various policies and industry standards, and make policy recommendations with respect to the use of general assistance and the possible expansion or development of new state-funded subsidy programs for use at a recovery residence, alternative models of oversight structure for recovery residences, including voluntary certification, mandatory certification or licensure, and policies related to the use of prescribed medications in recovery residences. The Commission would also be required to submit a report back to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services with their findings, recommendations, and any suggested legislation.

OBH respectfully opposes this legislation. The Department, alongside the Governor's Office of Policy and Innovation & Future (GOPIF) and the Maine Association of Recovery Residences (MARR), are already participating in multiple efforts surrounding the issues that this Commission would be seeking to address. As drafted, it is not clear how this Commission would facilitate new efforts or produce new recommendations without duplicating ongoing efforts.

Additionally, the Office of Behavioral Health contracts with MARR who provides training, policy development, and certification services utilizing standards set by the National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR). As the state affiliate of NARR, MARR serves as a conduit for policy and operational best practices related to Recovery Residence programming. Much of what is asked for in this bill is available from MARR currently or could be provided by MARR if requested.

The issues this legislation is intending to address could in fact be reviewed and discussed without the necessity of a formal Commission. It is also worth noting that some questions surrounding General Assistance and its use and place in recovery residences are being addressed via LD 215 put forth this session and may be duplicative or counterproductive to also be addressed through

this legislation. More broadly, the Office of Family Independence engaged in the rule making process to determine eligibility and payment standards for Recovery Residences, with rules released in 2024.

Rulemaking for Recovery Residences is on the administrative docket for this Fall, and additional policy considerations may be addressed during that process, which includes public comment and revision opportunities.

OBH, the Department of Licensing and Certification, and MARR are in the process of drafting an MOU in order to strengthen their collaboration to ensure clear guidance for Recovery Residences and residents who may move between levels of care.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Squirrell". The script is cursive and fluid.

Sarah Squirrell
Director
Office of Behavioral Health
Maine Department of Health and Human Services