

Janet T. Mills  
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Sara Gagné-Holmes  
Commissioner



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January 29, 2026

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

Re: LD 2065 – *An Act to Provide One-Time Funds to Support the Construction of a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility for At-Risk Youth*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on LD 2065, *An Act to Provide One-Time Funds to Support the Construction of a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility for At-Risk Youth*.

This bill provides \$1.1 million in one-time funding to support construction of Maine's first Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) to provide services to at-risk youth under 21 years of age. PRTFs are non-hospital-based facilities that provide intensive inpatient psychiatric care, including active treatment, intensive psychiatric monitoring, rehabilitative individual, group, and family therapies, and medical supervision 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These facilities are designed for young people whose clinical needs cannot be met through lower levels of care such as residential treatment, therapeutic foster care, or community-based services, but who do not need inpatient hospitalization. There are no PRTFs in Maine, and currently youth with PRTF-level needs are referred to out-of-state services.

The Department has worked hard over the last several years to support the development of a PRTF in Maine. Since 2017, The Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) and the Office of MaineCare Services (OMS) have worked in partnership to develop and implement a reimbursement rate for PRTF level of care in Maine. In 2024, Governor Mills signed LD 2214 (P.L. 2023, c. 643) into law, which established \$2 million in start-up funding to support the development of a PRTF. OBH subsequently posted a Request for Application (RFA) and in December 2024, Sweetser was the successful applicant and was awarded the contract to construct and operate the PRTF. However, there have been changes in material costs since their RFA proposal was submitted as construction cost estimates have increased significantly.

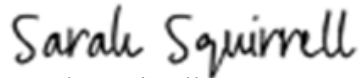
To better understand the costs, OBH engaged with Sweetser and learned that original cost estimations were significantly below the actual cost of standing up a 16-bed PRTF. Further, changes in material costs since the initial estimate have further increased the current cost estimates.

The Department is committed to exploring all potential sources of funding in collaboration with Sweetser to support the PRTF's development. OBH is also engaged in cost containment strategy discussions with Sweetser. In addition to the State funds, Sweetser is making its own investment to support the construction.

This facility will serve to strengthen the behavioral health care system for youth in Maine and provide greater access to more intensive psychiatric services for young people, rather than relying on out-of-state providers for this level of care, moving youth farther away from their natural supports and communities.

The Department and Administration are committed to being good partners in the development of this service and appreciate the opportunity to continue engaging with Sweetser and the Legislature as we work toward this shared goal. 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, MS

Director

Office of Behavioral Health

Maine Department of Health and Human Services