

TAYLOR M WEST  
Winslow  
LD 2082

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the Committee:

My name is Taylor West. I am a resident of Winslow and a candidate for the Maine House of Representatives. I am writing today to urge this committee to pause and reconsider the framework proposed in LD 2082.

As a veteran with PTSD and a frequent recipient of behavioral health care, I have deep respect for this body's desire to address the behavioral health workforce crisis. However, I am deeply concerned that we are rushing to authorize "alternative intelligence" in a field where human intelligence and trust are the only things that work. We are attempting to build a complex regulatory framework for AI, even though we have not yet legislated a baseline internet law that truly protects Maine consumers.

History is a patient teacher, and we have not yet learned the lessons from our lack of internet legislation. We allowed the digital world to become a "Wild West" where data is harvested, and privacy is an afterthought. To this day, we are still playing catch-up on basic consumer protections, data security, and the psychological impacts of social media on our youth. If we have not yet successfully protected patients from the predatory nature of the standard internet, we have no right to open the door for AI to enter the most sensitive space a human can inhabit: the therapist's office. Many members of this committee are from the generation that created and watched this lack of action harm younger demographics. It hurts me that the committee doesn't see the juxtaposition here; instead, it sees an opportunity to create a bill.

Vulnerable patients deserve more than a "human-in-the-loop" disclaimer. They deserve a system where their most private thoughts are not fed into an algorithmic model that we, as a state, do not yet fully control or understand. By authorizing "administrative" and "supplementary" AI support now, we are creating a precedent that prioritizes efficiency over the sanctity of the patient-provider relationship.

If we want to expand the behavioral health workforce, let's do it through the human-centric policies I am championing: loan forgiveness, competitive pay, and housing stability for our clinicians. Let's finish the job of protecting Maine consumers on the baseline internet before we invite a new, even more invasive technology into our healthcare framework. We must not repeat the mistakes of the past by letting technology outpace our duty to protect the vulnerable.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the safety of all Mainers.