



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify **neither for nor against LD 2196, An Act to Lower Health Insurance Costs, Reduce Barriers to Health Care and Ensure Fair Prices for Health Care.**

We are writing to convey one simple message, and that is that Maine cannot afford to lose any behavioral health services. We understand that healthcare is unaffordable for many Mainers and we fully support the need to address that. The committee should consider the importance of ensuring access for underserved Mainers, while understanding the impact of reducing services.

Across the state, long waitlists and workforce shortages greatly impact on the experience of those with mental health challenges in their attempt to seek care. An already difficult road to recovery is only complicated by the cutting of services. We gather feedback from peers throughout Maine who share their difficulties with accessing care, especially those in rural areas.

We understand the fiscal complexities of this topic and wish only to provide insight into peer experiences, which is one that must be considered when examining the impact of bills associated with healthcare costs. If financial changes impact the ability to access services, we will undoubtedly see a much larger scale mental health crisis than is currently occurring.

CCSM respectfully requests that any reforms being considered under LD 2196 must explicitly protect behavioral health services, evaluate the impact on psychiatric crisis care, and strengthen payment structures that support the mental health workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Simonne M. Maline

Executive Director