

LD 258: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025**Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine strongly supports the consideration and funding of critical mental health resources in the budget presented before this committee. NAMI Maine works closely with many law enforcement agencies and correctional facilities across the state in supporting the 1 in 4 Mainers living with mental health challenges. We respect their compassion and dedication in attempting to support the members of their communities who are struggling with daily mental health challenges. NAMI Maine also intends to speak at the DHHS budget hearings, advocating to ensure that critical mental health services receive the necessary funding to sustain the services within the community. I believe the fact that I am here today, discussing criminal justice system funding to ensure that some movement is made in guaranteeing mental health services, particularly those for the most vulnerable juveniles, are being delivered by trained mental health providers, should highlight what a crisis the mental health system is experiencing.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) was a study completed by the Kaiser-Permanente Insurance company in 1998 that began looking at certain life events that are strongly correlated with poor health outcomes. This includes ten events: domestic violence in the home, divorce or parental separation, parental incarceration, parental substance use, parental mental illness, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and emotional and physical neglect. This longitudinal study showed a better understanding that adverse experiences in childhood result in a significantly higher risk for later life health outcomes, shorter life expectancy, and other concerns health providers would want to monitor closely.¹ Later use of this data has provided a wealth of information regarding other high-risk behaviors, including the risk of incarceration. According to a US Attorney General's Task Force on Children exposed to violence, 90% of juveniles involved in the criminal justice system have experienced at least one significantly traumatizing event, with 30% meeting the criteria for post-traumatic stress.² In a comparison study completed in Florida, only 2.4% percent of juveniles in the criminal justice system report no significant traumatic experience versus CDC findings that 34% of juveniles experience no adverse experiences in the general population.³ The stark contrast between the pathways of young people involved in the justice system and the general public is drastic.

Due to the research regarding the young people currently involved in the criminal justice system and the pathways the adults entrenched in the system followed, budget decisions must be based on research and best practice models, such as investing in implementing Multi-systemic therapy in the community, trauma-informed residential facilities providing necessary treatment such as DBT, TF-CBT, and other interventions known to reduce recidivism and truly rehabilitate. This includes ensuring that the young people currently residing at Long Creek or still residing in the community relying on those supports receive evidence-based treatment implemented and funded by community mental health providers with certifications and programming delivered with a commitment to the required components.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.

¹ About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC

² Adverse Childhood Experiences and Crime — LEB (fbi.gov)

³ Journal of Juvenile Justice.pdf (prisonpolicy.org)