



**Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine**  
*The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers*

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of LD 539

**"An Act to Provide Substance Use Disorder Counseling for  
MaineCare Members with an Acquired Brain Injury"**

Sponsored by Representative Allison Hepler

March 27, 2023

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Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Malory Shaughnessy and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community based mental health and substance use treatment providers, providing services to over 80,000 Maine men, women, and children. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 539, "An Act to Provide Substance Use Disorder Counseling for MaineCare Members with an Acquired Brain Injury." This bill adds substance use disorder counseling to the comprehensive neurorehabilitation service system administered by the Department of Health and Human Services and directs the department to include counseling for substance use disorder in rehabilitative services for MaineCare members who have sustained an acquired brain injury.

In 2022, 716 Mainers died from a suspected drug overdose. You, as members of this committee, are very familiar with that number. But the number you may not be quite as familiar with is the number of non-fatal overdoses -- that number is 9,394. Said another way, 9,394 Mainers survived a drug poisoning event, referred to as an overdose. Opioid overdose induces respiratory depression that can lead to anoxic or hypoxic brain injury.

This emerging population, the many individuals now surviving a drug overdose, with anoxic/hypoxic brain injury requires specialized services including SUD counseling. It is important to understand the relationship between substance misuse and acquired brain injury and to accurately diagnose and treat these cooccurring conditions, as a substantial number of individuals with Acquired Brain Injury return to risky levels of alcohol and/or drug consumption within the first few years after injury. This proposal removes the financial barrier for MaineCare members to receive this much-needed treatment.

I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 539. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I would be happy to get you additional information for the work session.