



Ambureen Rana

124 West Broadway
Bangor, ME 04401
Cell: (207) 350-5081

Ambureen.Rana@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

April 5, 2023

Testimony of Representative Ambureen Rana Presenting

LD 540, An Act to Establish Peer Respite Centers for Adults with Mental Health Challenges in Maine

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Ambureen Rana, and I represent House District 21, which includes a portion of Bangor. I am here before you today to present **LD 540, An Act to Establish Peer Respite Centers for Adults with Mental Health Challenges in Maine.**

This bill directs the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Behavioral Health to develop a Request for Proposal for two adult peer respite centers in Maine. They should be based in geographically-diverse locations and should align with the higher usage areas based on DHHS crisis usage data. They should be completely run by peers with lived mental health challenges utilizing the Intentional Peer Support Model.

Peer respite is a voluntary, short-term, overnight program that provides community-based, non-clinical crisis support to help people find new understanding and ways to move forward. It operates 24 hours per day in a homelike environment. These programs do not replace traditional clinical services, but rather, they provide alternatives and choices for individuals. Further, these programs are managed and staffed by people with lived experience and are trained peer support specialists.

Programs like these reduce usage of the emergency room and crisis stabilization unit visits while allowing peers to stay in their community.

Complementary to our overwhelmed psychiatric crisis services, peer-run respites are less costly and often more effective than the alternatives. The average inpatient psychiatric stay in the United States costs \$7,100 and lasts 6.4 days. In comparison, the same length stay at the Afiya Respite in Massachusetts is \$2,594.

Peer-run respite programs offer support consensually, without coercion or force, creating a more respectful and warmer environment. In contrast, forced treatment has poorer results and drives some people away from the mental health systems.

We must take a multi-pronged approach to address our mental health care needs, and peer-run respite centers will help provide the care our community members are so desperately seeking.

Thank you for your time and consideration. While I am happy to answer any questions you may have, the Consumer Council System of Maine is also here and can help answer any more technical questions.