

April 5, 2023

Good Afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Scott Metzger, I am a resident of Cumberland Center and I am here today to testify **in favor of LD 540 “An Act to Establish Peer Respite Services for Adults with Mental Health Challenges in Maine .**

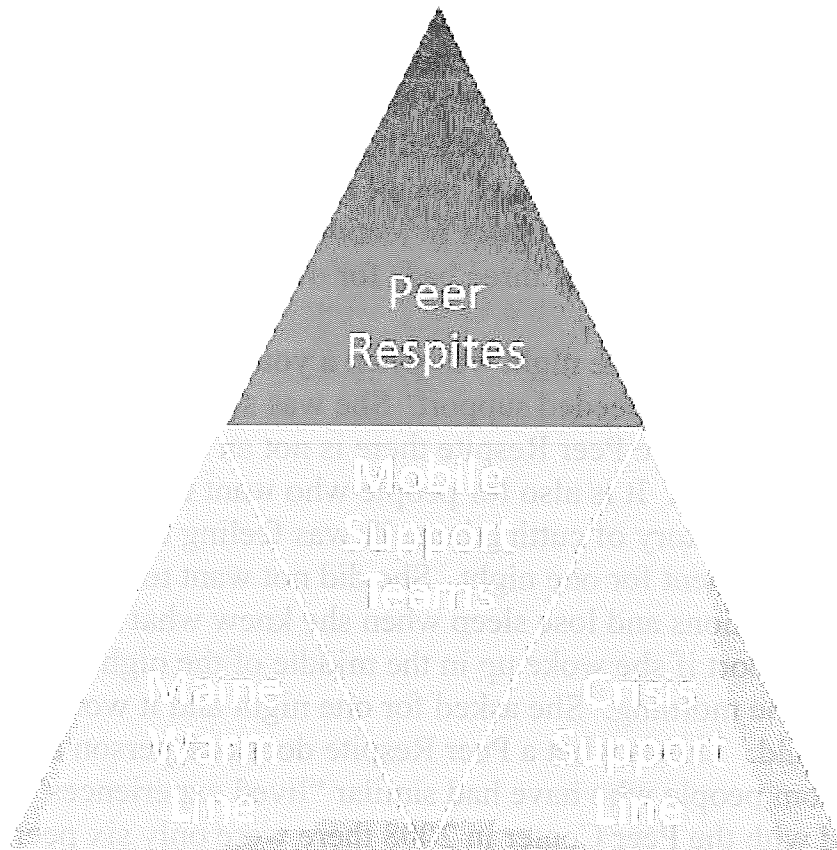
I was introduced to the idea of a Peer Respite in 2008 in Brunswick Maine. I had been hired to run Sweetser’s Learning and Recovery Center (LTC) and Peer Respite. I noticed one thing immediately. People had choices. At one end of the converted nursing home was a Crisis Stabilization Unit where more traditional 24/7 care was available. At the “peer” end of the building peers could come for the day and receive support and participate in recovery-oriented activities. They also had an option of using one of the three beds for overnight use if they needed it.

A real example of this use one night was when a young woman in her 20’s showed up at 7:00pm and said she needed support. She was shaken but knew what she needed to stay well. At the Peer Respite there is not an assumption people aren’t well when they get there. It is also for people who want to stay well. This woman explained she had a history of cutting herself, was feeling the urge, and needed to get out of their apartment for one night. She did not want to go to the hospital, answer a lot of questions and lose sleep when she knew what she needed; a safe place to sleep, support if she woke up in the middle of the night and to make it to class on-time in the morning. She asked for one night and it worked out exactly as she hoped it would. This is what a Peer Respite does one person at a time. 24/7 peer support from people who have had similar “lived experiences” in their lives. When I started with the Peer Center in 2008 there were only six peer respites in the United States and I knew where all of them were. The Learning & Recovery Center Peer Respite in Brunswick Maine was cutting edge nationally. Fast forward to 2023 and Maine hasn’t had a Peer Respite in years and there are 40+ Peer Respites in the United States. Maine, and the peers who need support, were left behind.

The idea of expanding Peer Respites in Maine is not new. In 2010 I co-authored a plan, with the Consumer Council System of Maine, to integrate Peer Respites into the Maine Crisis Support System. In a presentation to the Commissioner and interested agencies we recommended one Peer Respite per region. LD540 is

looking to establish two adult per respite centers for the State. Two Peer Respite is insufficient, with four being a minimum to be effective, but it is a start.

I will make a pledge to voluntarily bring my time and experience to making this vision come to life if you will take me up on my offer. I can be reached at scottjmetzger@yahoo.com. Let's get it done this time and not wait another 13 years!



Thank you for your time and consideration.

Scott Metzger

Cumberland Center