

April 5, 2023

Good Afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Jeffrey Kerr, and I am a resident of Farmington I am here today to testify in favor of LD 540.

About 12 years ago, I was in a bad place and did not know what to do. I was seeing my case manager that day and that is when I found out I had severe depression. I was shocked what would I do? Thankful my case manager suggested I go to a day program/peer center to fine-tune my skills in life. I'm really thankful for peer centers because they taught me many things in life, how to balance your checkbook, cook and so many other tools that we just consider everyday stuff. And although this is what was available to me at that time I believe if I had been able to go to a peer respite which is different from a peer center, it would have helped me even more. This is because peer respites offer guests a home-like environment and operates as short-term residential centers. They are also staffed by fellow peers with lived experience of mental health struggles.

The idea behind this type of mental health support is that peer staff can respond to guests in ways that are unlike the ways that case managers, social workers, therapists, or psychiatrists are trained to relate to their clients. Instead, peers can share stories of hope and healing from their own lives, while offering voluntary and recovery-oriented support for guests. This model centers on a mutual exchange of stories and personal connection that helps people along their recovery journey.

In closing, I urge you to pass LD 540.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeffery Kerr Po Box 244  
Farmington Maine  
207-778-1743  
[JeffreyKerr2020@Gmail.com](mailto:JeffreyKerr2020@Gmail.com)