

April 5, 2023

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

My name is Renee Smith, I am a resident of Dexter and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 540, **“An Act to Establish Peer Respite Centers for Adults with mental Health Challenges in Maine.**

Let me share what my experience was when I was inpatient in Acadia Hospital. The main question underlying my experience was “what is wrong with you” and I was asked that repeatedly. I felt lost and just not myself. I just didn’t want to live anymore. While I was in Acadia, they did help me open up and to talk about the issues I was dealing with. I did get my medications fixed.

What attracts me to having the option to peer respites are the homelike environment, the options for one on one peer support and groups with people who like me have lived experience with the challenges like mine.

It is important to have options and choices in the ways people receive support for those with mental health challenges like me and for my fellow peers.

In closing I urge you to **pass LD 540.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Renee Smith

Dexter, Maine