



**LD 1236 An Act to Increase the Provision of Children's Behavioral Health Services in Rural Areas and to Provide Support for Families of Children Receiving Services**

**Testimony in Support  
April 10, 2023**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with more than 10,000 employees statewide.

This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to expand behavioral health services for children in families involved in the child welfare system in rural areas. We are in full support of this legislation.

Northern Light Acadia Hospital is the psychiatric hospital clinical resource for children's behavioral health services in Northern an Eastern Maine. Caring for children and their families in communities throughout Maine is most successful when care is delivered close to home. To achieve this goal we work with community-based providers throughout the rural regions in the State of Maine. We experienced a trend in reduction of behavioral health services in rural regions before the pandemic and this trend has certainly been exacerbated by the pandemic challenges. We are called upon more and more to fill the access void in rural communities. Telehealth is a critical component of our ability to expand access but even then demand for services exceeds our telehealth capacity.

This bill is targeted to serve children often at the highest risk, those in the child welfare system in rural areas. Children will benefit from family team meetings and providers will be resourced with reimbursement and grant resources to expand service capacity into rural communities throughout the State of Maine. We look forward to working with rural behavioral health community partners as they expand capacity to care for children and families in need of behavioral health services.

Thank you.

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Maine Coast Hospital  
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