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April 12, 2023

Sen. Joseph Baldacci, Chair  
Rep. Michele Meyer, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Maine State Legislature  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Re: *LD 1204, An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program for Incarcerated Persons***

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Meyers, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Coalition to Ensure Fair Access to Opioid Addiction Treatment, we are pleased to provide testimony in **support** of LD 1204.

**About us.** Our Coalition is comprised of all thirteen OTP clinics licensed by the State of Maine to offer medication-assisted treatment services utilizing methadone. Our Coalition serves thousands of Mainers with opioid use disorder from clinics located throughout Maine, approximately 70% of whom are MaineCare eligible.

**LD 1204.** Members of our Coalition are on the front lines of Maine's opioid epidemic. At any one time, there are more than 4,500 Mainers receiving medication assisted treatment utilizing methadone in clinics throughout the State, a form of treatment considered the "gold standard" of care for opioid use disorder.

To be effective, individuals must receive medication on a daily basis. If there are gaps in medication, an individual will go into withdrawal which can trigger a range of adverse consequences, including relapse and overdose. We therefore work extremely hard with our patients to ensure continuity of care, and this mutual effort helps keep a high percentage in recovery. It is also notable that individuals in treatment are far less likely to commit a crime or be incarcerated, which is a tremendous benefit to society.

However, we are mindful of the fact that individuals with opioid use disorder, when untreated, are more likely to be incarcerated, and once incarcerated, such individuals are in need of treatment. For individuals eligible for MaineCare, incarceration strips them of this medical coverage. It also leaves them without coverage upon discharge, which is a time of tremendous risk for individuals with a history of

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opioid use disorder. It is sadly all too common for such individuals, upon release, to relapse, overdose, and die.

For this reason, steps to ensure that MaineCare eligible individuals do not lose their coverage as a result of incarceration is critically important. Not only will coverage improve the opportunities for such individuals to receive needed treatment while incarcerated, but it will also increase the likelihood that such individuals can receive treatment upon discharge – reducing their risk of overdose death.

**Conclusion.** For the reasons noted above, we support the proposed amendment to LD 1204 that would direct the State to apply for a waiver from the federal government to preserve MaineCare coverage for individuals who are incarcerated. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments, and if you have questions or need any other information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Cohen', written in a cursive style.

James I. Cohen  
Counsel to OTP Coalition

cc: Gordon Smith, Director of Opioid Response, State of Maine  
Katherine Coutu, State Opioid Treatment Authority, State of Maine