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**THE MAINE SENATE**  
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski**  
**In Support of LD 1224, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Seek Federal Approval for Reimbursement of Community-based Mobile Crisis Intervention Services”**

**Before the Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**21 April 2023**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Senator Nicole Grohoski, and I represent Senate District 7, the majority of Hancock County. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to present and support LD 1224, *Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Seek Federal Approval for Reimbursement of Community-based Mobile Crisis Intervention Services*.

The federal American Rescue Plan has created the opportunity for State Medicaid plans to provide community-based stabilization services for individuals who are in crisis due to mental health or substance abuse reasons. Last September, Oregon became the first state to receive approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide qualifying mobile crisis intervention services.<sup>1</sup>

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, mental health has plummeted for many Mainers. This resolve will help Mainers in crisis get the help they need, and will reinforce that crisis due to mental health or substance abuse does not always require a police response, but is often a medical event that requires specialized care and attention.

In Eugene, Oregon, a group called Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) has provided a community approach that has been in action for over thirty years. CAHOOTS is dispatched to respond to one of every eight calls made to emergency services in the city, greatly lifting the loads off of police, thus allowing them to focus on criminal activity. The American Rescue Plan can help us similarly address the needs of Mainers in crisis, with the federal government covering eighty-five cents of every dollar spent by Maine towards funding these services.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wyden.senate.gov/news/press-releases/wyden-oregon-the-first-state-to-earn-federal-approval-for-medicare-reimbursement-of-mobile-crisis-intervention-services>

As a member of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, I have been working with our Public Utilities Commission, which has oversight of our E911 system, to improve our crisis response protocols. I've learned that the biggest barrier to providing appropriate care is not how we receive calls and dispatch help, but rather that in many places in Maine, there are limited or no crisis response providers to dispatch. Medicaid funding is one resource to help us bridge this gap.

This bill will help ensure that police are not expected to be on the frontlines for medical issues, and that those who need help have specialists there for them. For these reasons, I urge this committee to pass LD 1224.

Thank you for your attention and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.