



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony in Support of LD 1506

**"Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to
Convene a Stakeholder Group to Study the Training and Recruitment of
Behavioral Health Professionals"**

Sponsored by Representative Sargent

April 25, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and esteemed members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Malory Shaughnessy and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community based mental health and substance use treatment providers. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 1506 "Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Convene a Stakeholder Group to Study the Training and Recruitment of Behavioral Health Professionals." As members of Maine's legislature and specifically, as members of this committee, you don't need me to tell you that Maine is experiencing a severe workforce shortage.

This resolve requires the Department of Health and Human Services to convene a stakeholder group to review issues related to the training and recruitment of all levels of behavioral health care professionals. The resolve requires the department to submit a report related to the study to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services and authorizes the committee to report out a bill relating to the report.

The Alliance would respectfully request to have a place on this stakeholder group. The workforce shortages within the behavioral health safety net providers of the Alliance are growing and we need to have solid data and solid plans for how to meet these increasing shortages.

A 2018 report by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, titled **"State-Level Projections of Supply and Demand for Behavioral Health Occupations: 2016-2030"** already projected shortages growing in Maine for all behavioral health occupations¹.

This was before the severe workforce impacts of the Covid Pandemic.

¹ <https://bh.w.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/state-level-estimates-report-2018.pdf>

We know this administration has already taken some measures to advance overall healthcare workforce shortages², but this bill would focus in depth on the behavioral health field, which is sorely needed. We already see in the papers nearly every day how patients are languishing in our emergency departments awaiting a bed for inpatient care, or awaiting services to be available for outpatient support. This bill would provide the framework needed to create a data driven approach to address these challenges and assure that Maine people have access to the quality behavioral health services they need and deserve.

Thank you for your time today. I urge an ought to pass vote on this bill, am happy to answer any questions you have for me and to bring any requested information to the work session.

² <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/blog/dhhs-advances-health-care-workforce-development-strategy-2023-04-07>
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