

Legislative Testimony in favor of LD 1719

May 3, 2023 @ 1 PM at the Health and Human Services Committee

Presented to members of the Health and Human Services Committee

Hello Chair, members of the Committee and members of the public attending,

I would like to speak in favor of passage of LD1719, my name is Tom Doherty, M S W and I am the Executive Director of Milestone Recovery in Portland, Maine We operate the Home Team, which is a mobile homeless outreach program serving Portland, a 36 bed men's shelter for intoxicated individuals, a 16 bed medically managed withdrawal unit and a 21-bed extended care treatment program in Old Orchard Beach We also operate some transitional housing for folks leaving our treatment program

Milestone has been working at the nexus of homelessness and substance use which are issues inextricably linked to each other since 1967 Substance use and the way it is treated has changed tremendously since '67 and the need for our work and deadliness of the substances have increased markedly The majority of our clients are Maine Care, Uninsured, and underinsured Clients with private insurance represent about 2-3 percent of the people we serve

In terms of the need for our work we have seen the number of people screen to get into our Detox go from a monthly average of 80 8 in 2014 to 303 91 in 2019 We are consistently turning away 70 percent of the people who screen for services This does not include the frustrated people who did not actually get through to talk to someone We recently upgraded our phone system and it now allows us to quantify calls that were not answered In one 48 hour period last week we noted 92 calls unanswered going to our detox unit While some of these could be the same person it likely resent many frustrated potential folks entering recovery

This overtaxed resource is detrimental to getting people into recovery because making the difficult decision to take on what could be the most difficult task of your lifetime is fraught with ambivalence and can change in an instance The metaphor of the ambulance service seems the most appropriate because someone can not and will not wait for services and will likely return to use if they encounter difficulty The decision to enter a dangerous, challenging and physically uncomfortable process and leave the known world of substance use is and extremely difficult decision

With that in mind we need to not only meet the overwhelming need are not currently meeting but exceed that need to support folks when they make that decision so that they can enter treatment when they are ready

Respectfully Submitted by,

Thomas Doherty, M S W Executive Director – Milestone Recovery -65 India Street, Portland Maine 04101

Telephone 207-775-4790 Ext 114 Email [tdoherty@milestone-recovery.org](mailto:tdoherty@milestone-recovery.org)