

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the HHS Committee, My name is Jon Reynolds, I'm a person in recovery and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1719 An Act to Establish Substance Use Disorder Treatment Centers

As a 32-year-old male who has struggled with alcohol use disorder since I was 16, LD 1719 is something very important to me. When I started out drinking it was just for fun or something I did with friends on the weekends. It quickly turned into a deadly disease for me though. By the time I had hit 20 years old my drinking had gotten so severe that I had already been to just about every detox in the state of Maine. That was available at the time. Most cases I would end up in psych wards because they didn't have detox beds when I would present myself at the hospital. At this time the withdrawal from alcohol wasn't terrible. It could be managed with some meds and a little supervision from medical staff. But by the time I had reached the age of 23 that was not the case. I was a full-blown alcohol dependent male who if I didn't have a drink, I would have severe tremors. These quickly turned into seizures and after that there is no turning back.

I can't count the number of times where I was rushed to the hospital via ambulance for alcohol withdrawal. I tried doing it at home and almost died on a few occasions. Once reaching the hospital I was stuck in an emergency room bed because there weren't any detox beds available anywhere in the state of Maine. And since my symptoms were so extreme it was vital that I be monitored by medical professionals. I would in most cases stay in the emergency room for days. I mean days and upwards of a week. They could not find any detox beds and I could not be released from the hospital, so this was my only option. I can recall a time from November of 2021 where I desperately needed a detox bed, and I had a close friend of mine drive me from Augusta Maine to Portland trying to find a bed and then all the way up to Bangor with no luck still. Until another one of our friends who we contacted found us a grant bed in Derry New Hampshire. So that day we drove over 400 miles trying to find me a detox bed. That's not the case for everyone. Not everyone is so lucky to have such a wonderful loving support team like I do. If I had not had these community supports, I might not have lived that day. And thank God I did.

I am now 16 months clean and sober from all mind- and mood-altering substances, I am about to graduate college with my associates in mental health and human services. I work a full-time job as a community organizer in the recovery field. A tax paying citizen and have my own apartment and a car. I'm about to commence from the co-occurring disorder court also known as drug court. I'm an avid volunteer for vulnerable communities here in the Kennebec County area and I host and facilitate meetings here as well.

If LD 1719 would have been implemented years ago then my road to recovery might not have taken so long. I might have been able to start my journey a lot sooner and accomplished more. I might not have had to almost die on multiple occasions and have to have someone call 911 because I was having seizures from detoxing at home. So please vote ought to pass LD 1719 so that the many other people who are suffering greatly might have a better chance at finding recovery and saving their lives. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.