



Testimony in Favor of LD 1714

An Act To Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers

May 10th, 2023

Greetings Senator Groboski, Representative Perry and other honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee of Taxation, My name is Steven Knockwood I am the Deputy Organizing Director for the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP) I stand before you today to give testimony in favor of LD 1714 An Act To Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers

It is widely accepted by many cultures and societies of past and present that no course of action is inherently only good or bad. In short, all things are both. If we as a collective can agree with this as a natural law that applies to all things, we are already halfway there.

Some individuals who choose to use cannabis recreationally will in fact develop Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD). Recovery Centers have proven to be the best place for individuals seeking services and support to find them and connect with others who can identify with them.

Currently there is no long term plan to sustain those that have opened within our state. Most do not have budgets large enough to serve the populations they are expected to. It is time for our State to step up and give these places the ability to improve on services and supports, expand hours to better serve and to overcome barriers often faced when these are in rural areas.

The State of Maine collects revenue from the sales and excise tax paid by the individuals who choose to use cannabis in our state. Currently 12% of what is collected is used to aid prevention and aid education efforts concerning police. Upstream and downstream from where the money from LD 1714 will be vitally spent if signed into law. We as a society need to ensure that Recovery Centers are available and well funded for all people to utilize for recovery services. The people working as peer supports and recovery coaches are making livable wages where currently most positions due to funding are volunteer based. These trained individuals who often pull from their own lived life experiences and trauma deserve to be compensated an amount reflective of the amazing work they do.

The most important thing I feel I can tell you is some of my experience concerning the Recovery Centers. March 15th 2020 I was released from incarceration into the Bangor Recovery Community. What's so special about that date is it was two days before our world as we knew it changed, Covid began. I remember the panic of isolation felt by our community, I specifically remember hearing of the BARN closing its doors. When this happened we lost people to recurrence of disease on a daily basis, we also lost many to suicide from the stressors of this isolation. I believe it was this set of events that proved just how vital Recovery Centers are to individuals who have Substance Use Disorder and are trying to recover. We can not afford to lose any of our existing Recovery Centers, we must continue to increase the number of Centers and we need to improve on how the services in these centers are provided.



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I ask that you join with the many who you have and will hear here today and support this piece of legislation. Recovery Centers provide essential services to our communities and their members. We need LD 1714 to ensure that funding is never again an issue in our state. Please vote in favor of LD 1714 and help sustain funding for our Recovery Centers here in Maine.

I am willing to answer any questions the committee may have at this time and ME-RAP will make someone available at the work session.

Nitap(thank you)

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