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**Testimony by Portland Recovery Community Center by Leslie Clark, Executive Director
in Favor of LD 1714:**

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

Committee on Taxation
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

May 10, 2023

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation

My name is Leslie Clark. I am a person in long-term recovery from alcohol and drugs and serve as the Executive Director of Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC). I am testifying today in favor of LD 1714. Recovery Community Centers play a vital role in helping people find and retain long-term recovery from addiction. The need has never been greater to provide this important resource in every community in Maine, and yet the funding streams are limited. This bill will provide an additional funding stream that comes directly from the recreational sales of cannabis. It is estimated that as many as 40% of people who use cannabis will become addicted, especially if they are under 25 years old. Assuring that adequate resources are in place to help people who struggle with addiction is essential.

I have been a person in recovery since 1989. When I first came into recovery, as a professional and a leader of a prestigious nonprofit in Austin, there were few places to find help and safeguard confidentiality to protect against stigma. Long-term recovery is hard (if not impossible) for most people to sustain unless they are connected to a community of others who have themselves recovered and can offer support and hope. Today, recovery community centers offer more options to more people and have proven to be a highly effective part of the solution to the nation's drug and alcohol crisis, offering low-cost and accessible choices for people to get help and recover.

Portland Recovery Community Center opened its doors in 2012, a time when we were one of the two recovery community centers in Maine. Today, PRCC serves as the hub of the network of recovery community centers across Maine. After York County opens its first center this July, there will be 20 recovery community centers statewide. But many of these centers struggle to keep their doors open and create a sustainable organization due to lack of adequate funding.

Recovery Community Centers (RCCs) are organizations led and governed by representatives of local recovery communities with a primary focus on recovery from substance use disorder that provides nonclinical, peer recovery support services such as recovery support groups, recovery coaching, telephone recovery support, skill-building groups, harm reduction activities, recovery-focused outreach programs to engage people seeking or in recovery and recovery-focused policy and advocacy activities. RCC's have been demonstrated to help people maintain long-term recovery, build recovery capital, and improve quality of life (*Recovery Research Institute*).

Researchers from the Recovery Research Institute have affirmed what we have known to be true. Their studies have indicated that RCC participation is linked to increased abstinence, lowered substance-related harms, and increased psychological well-being. Furthermore, it takes 15 years for the average recovering U.S. person to reach the same quality of life and functioning as someone in the general population. However, individuals receiving peer support services through RCCs are able to reach the same quality of life as someone in the general population in just five years.

Investing in recovery support services reduces the societal costs of SUD. A study in 2021, estimated the impact of the opioid epidemic in Maine to be \$6.8 billion in 2017 or \$5,099 per Mainer, the sixth highest per capita cost in the US (Luo et al. 2021). RCC attendance is linked to enhanced income, employment, and well-being. Furthermore, expanding recovery support services increases the economic successes long-term recovery brings to Maine. According to the National Safety Council, employers stand to save an average of \$8,500 per employee in recovery from a SUD.

If passed, LD 1714 will provide an additional and steady funding stream for Maine RCCs to operate and meet the dire need for recovery support services in Maine's communities. It is only fair and reasonable that the profit from the sales of cannabis support help support a network of recovery supports in every community for individuals and families. When I first came into recovery, the drugs of my generation, while dangerous, were not as lethal nor were they as prevalent. Maine has done an exceptional job of building recovery resources, but more are needed if we are to stop the tide of addiction and offer people a way to recover. I am deeply grateful to be a person in recovery and to be in a position to help others find their way to freedom from the ravages of addiction. Recovery is possible. At PRCC and throughout Maine we see individuals rebuild their lives, we see families reunited, we see employees rejoin the workforce, and we see how communities benefit from investments in recovery. I urge this committee to vote in favor of LD 1719.

I thank the Committee for taking the time to listen to my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.

Sincerely,

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