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# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Ambureen Rana sponsoring*

## **LD 1714, An Act to Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers Using a Percentage of the Adult Use Cannabis Tax Revenue**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation*

Good afternoon, Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation. My name is Ambureen Rana, and I represent House District 21, which includes a portion of Bangor. I am here before you today to present **LD 1714, An Act to Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers Using a Percentage of the Adult Use Cannabis Tax Revenue.**

I want to begin by thanking the Mills' Administration for their dedication to recovery community centers. Under Governor Mills' leadership, these centers have become a beacon of hope in 12 counties in Maine, with plans to expand to every county in the near future. And while we are grateful to Governor Mills for her dedication, we are also worried that these centers currently have no sustainable funding source and that many of them are operating on "shoestring budgets and hopes and dreams," with five of the centers currently only receiving \$50,000 a year from DHHS as start-up funding with no plans about what happens when that funding runs out.

Pr2Peer, located in my home of Penobscot County, is one of these centers. In written testimony from board member Frank Clukey, the \$50,000 contract with DHHS currently helps to cover the mortgage of the center, electric, oil, winter plowing expenses, insurances, office supplies, coffee, meeting expenses, community programming such as paint night, and grab-and-go meals. Pr2Peer also provides help with transportation to and from the center so no one is left without recovery support in a rural Maine community, such as Medway. This center struggles to meet their financial obligations each month and worries about when a pipe will burst (which it did this winter) and how they will find the extra \$1,000 to cover the insurance deductible.

Reading this testimony, I struggled to understand how they are keeping the center going Who is opening the center's door for meetings, driving to get people, and making the meals they provide? How are they paying their staff? Is it completely run by volunteers? I don't know the answers to these questions, but I do know that a center providing such vital services to our community should not be operating on hopes and dreams

As the title suggests, LD 1714 seeks to create a sustainable funding source for centers like Pir2Peer by creating the Recovery Community Centers Fund at the Department of Health and Human Services, which will be funded using 12% of the tax revenue collected on the sale of adult-use cannabis Based on Maine Adult Use Cannabis tax revenues from 2022, this bill could provide approximately \$3.28 million a year to the Recovery Community Centers Fund

Furthermore, the bill does not take away from the Adult Use Cannabis Public Health and Safety Fund - which from my understanding is currently funding prevention PR campaigns and education to law enforcement However, it does clarify that 12% of the sales tax revenue collected on the sale of adult use cannabis and adult use cannabis products is credited to the Adult Use Cannabis Public Health and Safety and Municipal Opt-in Fund, not 12% of all sales tax revenue collected under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 36, section 1811 - which is a technical fix to the already existing statute

Finally it creates a definition for recovery community centers in the Maine Revised Statute, as follows

- Recovery community center means an independent, nonprofit organization 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 recovery or in recovery and recovery focused policy and advocacy activities

This definition was created by the Recovery Research Institute, a nationally recognized research organization focused on the impacts of recovery on communities across America

LD 1714 has strong bi-partisan support in both the House and Senate, including co-sponsorship from Senators Chipman and Pouliot, Representatives Crockett, Hasenfus, Matlack, Milliken, Perry and Republican House Minority Leader Representative Faulkingham That is because recovery from substance use knows no political affiliation, recovery is for everyone and impacts everyone, regardless of race, gender, class, and yes, even party affiliation

Recovery community centers are also for everyone, including people in or seeking recovery, family members, and young people Today you will hear countless stories of the impact that these centers have had on Mainers from (almost) every part of our state

When I think about recovery centers, I think about the BARN, located just across the river from where I live in Bangor. I think about their slogan, "supporting recovery is a community responsibility." I believe this to be true, but more than just a community responsibility, supporting recovery is a state responsibility. It is this committee's responsibility.

I do also want to raise an amendment for consideration by this committee. It was brought to my attention that there are concerns from recovery community members that if this fund passes, Maine could use this new fund as a way to supplant current funding received by recovery community centers. This is not the intention of this fund. The intention of this fund is to ensure that struggling recovery community centers can receive enough funding to do the good work they are doing. That is why I am asking the committee to consider adding a line that requires the Department to use this funding to supplement current funding, not supplant it.

Recovery Community Centers are staples to our communities. We need folks to have a safe place and community if we want them to become successful in their recovery journey.

While we all might not agree that cannabis should even be legal, I think that we can all agree that since it is, some of the revenue from cannabis sales should be used to support the recovery of people who want it - in the same way that we use some of the revenue to prevent the use of cannabis now.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will support this bill. I am happy to answer any questions you have.