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Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
February 22, 2024

Thank you, Chair Senator Rotundo, Chair Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Committee. I am here today to offer support for LD 1714, to use Recreational Adult Use Cannabis Tax Revenue for the Recovery4ME fund. My name is Bruce Campbell, and I represent the Recovery Community on the Maine Substance Use Disorders Services Commission. But I am here today as a person in recovery who has watched Maine take a national leadership role in developing an Integrated Wellness-Oriented System of Care.

In 2010, there were only two recovery community centers in the State. Since then, and more so over the last five years, we now have 17 and counting, all providing recovery support services to hundreds if not thousands of people every day.

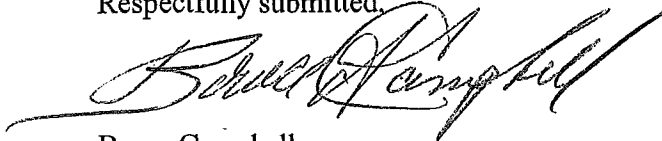
There is a fiscal distinction between an outpatient substance use treatment clinic and a recovery community center. One is a medical model; one is a social or community model. For approximately the same budget and the same number of staff, outpatient treatment may serve 75-125 unduplicated people monthly; recovery community centers serve as many as 700 unduplicated people per month. Recovery community centers also generate volunteer hours that are often equal to the same amount of funding they may receive from the State, doubling their return on investment.

While outpatient services may have an occasional open house, recovery community centers provide a variety of social and educational activities, dances, barbeques, and potlucks. The centers support recovery education by offering "their face and voice of recovery" to their local communities.

On the reverse side of this testimony is an article written by a California consultant entitled "Signs of Recovery – Maine" that was published in a national newsletter in December. He concludes the article by stating, "*Maybe it's no coincidence that the Maine state motto is the Latin word **Dirigo**, meaning "I lead".*"

I encourage you to support LD 1714 and continue Maine's leadership role in supporting recovery for its individuals and families. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,



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Signs of recovery: Maine

By John de Miranda

Recovery stuff is happening in Maine. Recent efforts described below may point the way for other states.

The Maine Substance Use Disorders Services Commission (SUDSC) has been reauthorized within the administration of state Gov. Janet Mills. The Commission, in reinventing itself, has moved decisively away from drug war ideology to a recovery paradigm. This shift to an integrated wellness-oriented system of care includes identifying the interconnected elements of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery.

The state's commitment to recovery-oriented approaches is evident in its support for the expansion of recovery community centers in 17 locations around the state during Mills' tenure as governor. I visited one of these centers recently and describe the experience below.

In addition to the centers, recovery support includes a network of recovery coaching, peer-based support, sober housing, recovery workplace initiatives and advocacy as essential services. The state recently issued a request for proposals for comprehensive recovery community centers, again seeking to achieve statewide access to recovery support.

Writing as the SUDSC Chair, Bruce Campbell, who represents the recovery community on the Commission, declared:

"While most may agree that the 'war on drugs' is dead, we cherish the fact that the battle for recovery is being won each and every day... in every county, in every city and every town in the great state of Maine. Substance use problems exist across virtually every sector of modern life and [are] a primary driver in health, criminal justice, social services and business-related costs and liabilities. Conversely, by embracing a more integrated wellness approach, where medical, mental health and substance use responses are paired with housing, employment and education, people with substance use disorders transform those liabilities into social assets. The hearts of our recovery community centers live in the communities where they are located, reflecting the unique strengths and challenges of those communities. We embrace the notion that supporting recovery is a community responsibility. When guided by dynamic leadership at the highest levels of policy and administration, we believe that despite these challenges, our best days lie ahead."

Perhaps the most significant sign of government policy supporting recovery is Legislative Document 1714 currently before the Maine legislature. The title of the proposed law says it all: An Act to Create a Sustainable Funding Source for Recovery Community Centers Using a Percentage of the Adult Use Cannabis Tax Revenue.

To me, the BARN (Bangor Area Recovery Network, bangorrecovery.org), is the gold standard to which recovery community centers should aspire. Located in a former furniture store, there is tons of space and plenty of off-street parking. On the evening that I visited, a large mutual aid support meeting was underway that occupied the main space. Recovery coaching sessions were going on in private spaces. Childcare happens in a room stuffed with toys, games and volunteers. Open 7 days a week from 10 am until late evening, something is always happening. How about free introductory yoga classes, trivia night, free-seated massage, Stephen King movie night or sessions of tie dye fun? In my case, I could have greatly benefitted from the budgeting basics 101 class when my recovery began.

Thanks to a famous local author who is a donor, the kitchen was recently upgraded to commercial standards in the hope of opening a recovery cafe. There is even a small carpentry shop in the back (remember, the former furniture store) waiting for a creative use to be discovered.

Thanks to broad community support, the building is owned outright by the nonprofit, with no outstanding mortgage. Across the parking area is a home that provides recovery housing for men, and a block away is a large renovated Victorian home that provides recovery housing for women.

My state, California, with a population of almost 40 million, is often viewed as a place where innovation happens first, but we don't come near the recovery infrastructure that Maine is constructing, despite its population being 1/28th the size.

Maybe it's no coincidence that the Maine state motto is the Latin word "dirigo," meaning "I lead."

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FROM THE FIELD ♦♦♦