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## Testimony in Support of Funding LD1714

February 22, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and Members of the Appropriations Committee and Members of the Taxation Committee,

My name is Robert Fickett. I am a person in long-term recovery from SUD and the Executive Director of the Bangor Area Recovery Network in Brewer, Maine. I am here today to ask you to prioritize funding for LD 1714.

The impact that the opioid epidemic has had in Maine is staggering. Economically, socially, and of course, in terms of human lives, the cost we have been paying is far too high. Through all of this, Maine's Recovery Community Centers have stood as a beacon of hope. Offering a variety of peer-based recovery support services, community engagement opportunities, and vital resource linkages to help people find success in their recovery.

Unfortunately, many recovery centers receive little public support and some even struggle just to keep the lights on and the bills paid. These passionate and hard-working individuals and organizations who have done so much so much to fill the gaps in our treatment systems deserve better than an uncertain future. If funded, LD 1714 will create a sustainable funding stream for Maine's Recovery Community Centers and allow this vital work to be focused on without the lingering doubt of whether the next maintenance expense will put them in the red.

The Bangor Area Recovery Network saved my life. But that is an oversimplification. Because the real gift my local Recovery Community Center gave me was the opportunity and tools to make the most of that life. The supportive services, additional training, mentoring, and community resources provided helped me find a sense of purpose, direction, and longevity in my recovery. The value of Recovery Community Centers cannot be underestimated as they are not just saving lives, they are transforming them.

716 overdose deaths in 2022 and 607 in 2023. This is the morbid measuring stick we often use to measure our fight against this terrible epidemic. Today, I invite you to examine the other side of that statistic. Look closely at the lives saved. Because many of these individuals are not just alive but they *thrive*. In many cases, because of the support they receive at a Recovery Community center. That is something worth investing in.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

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