



Testimony in Support of Funding LD 1714

February 22, 2024

Good Afternoon Esteemed Members of the Appropriations and Taxation Committees,

My name is Tess Parks, and I am a Policy Organizer with Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP). As a person in long-term recovery from substance use disorder, I am here today to urge you to prioritize funding for LD 1714.

Increasing funding for recovery community centers is not only morally right, it shows fiscal responsibility in both return on investment and cost savings. Our budget more than anything else reflects our values. As recovery advocates, we often hear that we cannot afford many of the resources that would fill current gaps in Maine's addiction treatment services. I would make the case that we simply cannot afford the costs of not investing more into recovery services.

According to a 2022 report from the University of Maine's Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, the lost productivity attributed to the opioid epidemic in Maine in 2019 was \$271 million annually from morbidity and \$565 million in mortality. This same report cited a study that estimated the total economic impact of the opioid epidemic in Maine to be \$6.8 billion in 2017, which was largely attributable to reduced quality of life from opioid use disorder, the value of life lost to overdose deaths, and lost productivity¹. The total emotional toll that the opioid epidemic has brought to Mainers, their families, and their communities is immeasurable.

Investing in RCCs helps mitigate the staggering economic costs of our seemingly relentless addiction crisis. RCC attendance is linked to increased quality of life, recovery capital, and functioning². When it comes to contributing to society, 84% of people in long-term recovery report paying taxes, and 83% of people in recovery report having a compensated, stable job as a result of long-term recovery³. As someone that has buried a family member and many friends who have passed away from addiction, I want to make it clear that no amount of money will ever capture a fraction of their loss.

By funding LD 1714, our budget will reflect the value that communities devastated by pain and loss deserve support in healing from addiction. By funding LD 1714, our budget will reflect the value that some of our most vulnerable neighbors should have access to low barrier resources.

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

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¹ Daley, Angela, Prianka M. Sarker, Liam Sigaud, Marcella H. Sorg, and Jamie A. Wren. "Drug-Related Morbidity and Mortality in Maine: Lost Productivity from 2015 to 2020." *Maine Policy Review* 31.1 (2022): 8-18, <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mpr/vol31/iss1/1>.

² <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14281>

³ https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Economic-Benefits-of-Recovery_Rebrand-03.13.20.pdf