

Testimony of Douglas G. Smith, MD, St. Mary's Health System
Providing Further Information Regarding

LD 2214, An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

February 27, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the HHS and AFA Committees. I am Dr. Doug Smith, Chief Medical Officer and Vice President of Medical Affairs at St. Mary's Health System in Lewiston. I am a board-certified Family Physician with over 25 years of experience and have served Androscoggin County for over 20 years. My responsibilities at St. Mary's include oversight of behavioral health services.

Since the tragedy in Lewiston, the need for behavioral health services has skyrocketed. This has spurred conversations about closing gaps in the continuum of services to better meet the needs of Lewiston and surrounding communities. This budget addresses one of the gaps in service we have, but we need your support to supply another crucial missing piece.

Current State

St. Mary's Health System is one of Maine's largest providers of acute behavioral health care for adults and adolescents, with inpatient behavioral health units staffed for 48 beds, including a detox unit. Our emergency services include one of Maine's few dedicated spaces for behavioral health emergency care, accommodating 22 patients and built with separate adolescent and adult treatment areas. Patients served are mainly from Androscoggin, Oxford, Cumberland, and Sagadahoc counties, and our emergency and detox services serve patients statewide.

Almost all Maine hospitals with behavioral health units are supported by day hospital services, which deliver services more intensive than typical community-based care to those who do not require an inpatient stay or who are ready for discharge but cannot thrive with a lower level of community support alone. Yet Maine's second largest population center, Lewiston and its surrounding region, lacks this level of care.

A Better Model for Care

Especially as we grapple with the aftermath of tragedy, we must close serious gaps in the continuum of care for people relying on Lewiston-centered behavioral health services. There are two such gaps -- day hospital services, and a crisis receiving center. Both of these services improve care and relieve pressure and costs for overcrowded emergency room and inpatient services: currently, patients who need more than community care but less than acute care often languish for lack of an appropriate placement.

I thank the Governor for including a crisis receiving center in Lewiston in this budget. LD 2105 proposes one-time funding to stabilize St. Mary's finances, which will allow the hospital to move forward with its plans for a day hospital program. Without that one-time relief, the outlook for St. Mary's is to further curtail services, while the unnecessary costs of excessive reliance on emergency and inpatient services continue.

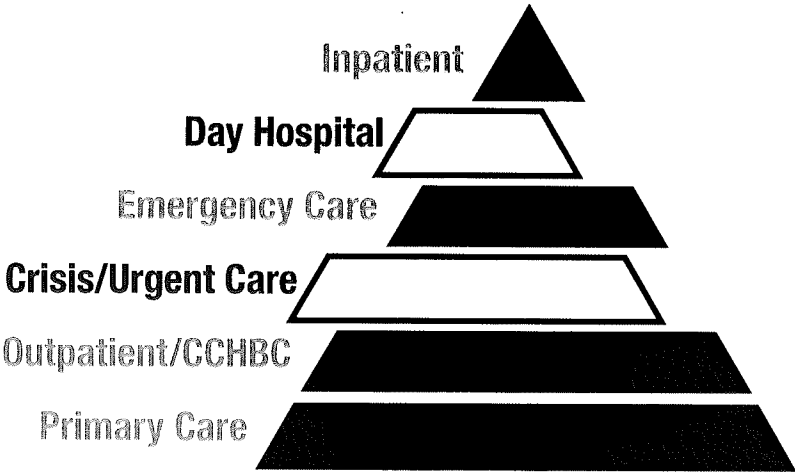
I urge your support of both the proposed Lewiston Crisis Receiving Center and for LD 2105. Together, these programs will strengthen access to behavioral health services centered in Lewiston and provide care to those who need it most. You will find further detail on the back side of my printed testimony. Thank you for your consideration and for your attention.

Creating a Full Continuum of Behavioral Health Care in Lewiston-Auburn

The tragedy in Lewiston last October has elevated the conversation around access to Behavioral Health Services and underscored the need to do more. In the ensuing months, professionals and community members have engaged in thoughtful conversations aimed at structuring new services to meet the very real needs of Lewiston and beyond.

Current State

St. Mary's Health System is one of Maine's largest providers of acute behavioral health care for adults and children, including inpatient behavioral health units staffed for 48 beds, including a detox unit. Behavioral health emergency services include one of Maine's few dedicated spaces for behavioral health emergency care, accommodating 22 patients and built with separate child and adult treatment areas. This unit extends the capability of a very busy medical-surgical Emergency Department. Patients served are mainly from Androscoggin County, Oxford, Cumberland and Sagadahoc counties, although its emergency and detox services serve patients statewide. Almost all Maine hospitals with dedicated behavioral health units are supported by day hospital services, which deliver services more intensive than typical community-based care to those who do not require an inpatient stay or who are ready for discharge but cannot thrive with a lower level of community support alone. Yet Maine's second largest population center, Lewiston and its surrounding region, lacks this level of care.



A Better Model for Care

Especially as it grapples with the aftermath of tragedy, the time is now to close serious gaps in the continuum of care for the 3 counties reliant on Lewiston-centered behavioral health services. There are two such gaps -- the day hospital services, and a crisis receiving center to provide immediate and short-term crisis stabilization for voluntary patients over age 14. Both of these services not only improve care but also relieve pressure and costs for overcrowded emergency room and inpatient services, where patients who need more than typical community care but less than ER or inpatient care often languish for lack of an appropriate placement.

Funding for a crisis receiving center in Lewiston has been included in the Governor's supplemental budget. LD 2105 proposes one-time funding to stabilize St. Mary's finances, which will allow the hospital to move forward with its plans for a day hospital program to improve access and quality while controlling costs. Without that one-time relief, the outlook for St. Mary's is to further curtail services, while the unnecessary costs of excessive reliance on emergency and inpatient services continue.

| | <u>Bed Count</u> | <u>Day Hospital</u> |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| Spring Harbor Hospital | 100 | Yes |
| Northern Light Acadia Hospital | 68 | Yes |
| St. Mary's Regional Medical Center | 48 | No |
| Southern Maine Healthcare | 40 | Yes |
| MaineGeneral Medical Center | 30 | Yes |
| Maine Medical Center | 21 | Yes |
| Pen Bay Medical Center | 18 | Yes |
| Northern Maine Medical Center | 16 | No |
| Mid Coast Hospital | 13 | Yes |



We strongly urge your support of both the Supplemental Budget allocation for the Lewiston Crisis Receiving Center and for LD 2105. Together, these programs will strengthen access to behavioral health services centered in Lewiston and provide care to those who need it most.