



A better tomorrow starts **today**.

SUBSTANCE USE | MENTAL HEALTH
OUTPATIENT | RESIDENTIAL

To: Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: Dan Morin, Director of Community Engagement

Date: February 27, 2024

Subject: 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

Chairpersons Rotundo & Sachs, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on LD 2214 concerning operations and funding for programs under the Department of Health and Human Services. Specifically, policies and funding related to substance use disorders and mental health care.

Day One has been a leading provider of substance use and mental health treatment services for adolescents and families for 50 years and operates the **ONLY** residential substance use disorder treatment programs in Maine for teenagers 13 to 18 years old.

We respectfully request the Committee include LD 1305, Resolve, to Design and Implement a Community-based Model of Care for Adolescent Mental Health – which currently sits on the Appropriations Table – in the final draft of LD 2214.

LD 1305 provides \$1.5 million in one-time funding for DHHS to develop, implement, and measure the impact of community-based services to treat acute adolescent cooccurring disorders. It is essentially a two-year pilot project over three regions of the state to support adolescents following discharge from residential care for substance use and/or to address urgent treatment needs during times when residential care is not available.

Background

The consequences of teen substance use are staggering in both financial and human terms. Because they are more likely to become dependent than those who start as adults, the costs often follow them for a lifetime – adding each year to the taxpayer bill for health care, developmental disabilities and delays, criminal and family courts, prisons and jails, unemployment and other social services.

- Maine ranks second nationwide in the percentage of children ages 12-17 who reported using illicit drugs, including marijuana, in the past month and Maine teenagers are 47% more likely to have used drugs in the last month than the average American teen.
- Overdose deaths for adolescents have increased dramatically in recent years across the United States increasing 109% from July–December 2019 to July–December 2021.



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- Of the 2,079 child and teen overdose deaths in 2021, 53% were attributed to narcotics and hallucinogens. Of those, nearly 75% involved synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.
- Developing brains are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of substances and youths with substance use issues experience higher rates of physical and mental illness.
- Some teens are at even greater risk because of genetics, family history, trauma, and behavioral health problems.

Need for LD 1305

Unfortunately, research illustrates that there is a general trend of high rates of substance relapse and subsequent treatment readmission among adolescents.

- Most adolescents who completed an inpatient treatment program relapsed (or returned to use) to pretreatment usage levels within 12 months of treatment and,
- Two out of three youth who completed outpatient treatment returned to use within the first six months following their treatment.
- Research shows that “continuing care, or aftercare, for adolescents also has been repeatedly shown to reduce the likelihood of relapse and enhance the maintenance of treatment gains”.

It is important to realize sustained recovery is possible and a return to use **does not equal failure**. Addiction is defined as a chronic, **relapsing** disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences.

Day One is concerned about the state of youth substance use treatment and statewide supports, especially continuing care and long-term recovery support services in the community. Youth substance use is an ongoing concern, and the needs of this group are distinctly different from the adult system.

We see all too often a client that excels within the confines of our residential program, quickly relapse following discharge once all the same pressures and temptations are once again at their door. We have also seen plenty of clients who have excelled in our program and are openly fearful of discharge because they know what challenges lie ahead when they get back home – often an enabling versus supportive environment. Currently there is very little in terms of clinical support that is available to help in either of these cases.

It is no exaggeration to say that the value of community-based services while in recovery can separate success from failure and literally be a matter of life and death.

Benefits of LD 1305

LD 1305 is intended to develop a level of community-based support that has been needed for a very long time. It seeks to place a modest number of clinical resources at a regional level that will be able to support high need youth who have recently been discharged from residential SUD programs or who, for whatever reason, cannot attend those programs in the



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OUTPATIENT RESIDENTIAL

first place.

It proposes employing an evidence-based model of care that has been shown to be effective with this population and to study the efficacy of this approach over a two-year period.

Results can then be reviewed and informed decisions made regarding whether this is the right investment for the long term.

Day One very much believes that with such an overwhelming need for services in our youth, we must start somewhere. Pick a model and see if it makes a difference. We feel this bill represents a very prudent step in trying to make a meaningful difference so that there are fewer and fewer recovery gaps for adolescents.

Overview

- It's **one-time** funding of \$1.5 million.
- It's essentially a **pilot project** which will take a three-region approach with a standardized clinical model for all adolescent acute substance use care to evaluate the effects of the policy rather than simply on intentions.
- Provides a two-year performance period to **measure effectiveness before scaling up**. Too many well-intentioned and broadly implemented public policy ideas often fail to translate into the widespread gains they envisioned.

In closing, we urge the Committee's continued support of LD 1305 and its inclusion in the final draft of the supplemental budget document. Thank you.

Portland Press Herald

Letter to the editor: Day One program makes recovering teen grateful

April 8, 2018,

I am writing to tell you about my struggle with being a teenager in recovery.

I am an 18-year-old, originally from Rumford, and grew up around alcohol and drugs; both of my parents struggle with addiction. Rumford is a small mill town where there's nothing besides booze and drugs and the mill. I grew up in an abusive environment as a child. I enjoyed school but as I got older, I started using drugs to fit in with friends, and I continued to use because it filled a void and took some of the pain away that I had experienced as a child.

I found myself physically and mentally dependent on substances, doing everything I could get my hands on, from pot to heroin. I started manipulating my family and friends to get high, and when that didn't work I stole from them. I went on a two-month binge that landed me in Long Creek, and led me to Day One in September.

Since being at Day One, I've gained back things I lost: I came into the program with eight credits as a senior and now I have 20; I rebuilt relationships I lost, and I can now take accountability for my actions and emotions. This program has turned me into an adult and given my family their loving kid back at the same time.

I am forever thankful for this program and the staff here. They understand the struggle of addiction, and don't judge us for our past and disease. They look to help us instead of putting us down, and they make us feel welcomed and make it so we can be open about our past and disease.

Hi, I'm Ethyn, and I am a grateful alcoholic and drug addict.

Ethyn Buotte
Dixfield

Rumford teen sentenced to 3 years in fatal crash

SJ sunjournal.com/2019/05/31/rumford-man-sentenced-to-serve-3-years-in-connection-to-dixfield-mans-death

May 31, 2019



Ethyn Buotte, right, is comforted by his attorney, Jeffrey Wilson, on Friday morning in Franklin County Superior Court in Farmington as Justice Robert Muller reads the obituary of Griffyn Smith, who was killed in an accident exactly a year ago in a car Buotte was driving. *Sun Journal photo by Russ Dillingham*

FARMINGTON — A Rumford teen was sentenced Friday to serve three years of a 10-year sentence for manslaughter in the death of his best friend.

Ethyn Eric Buotte, 19, pleaded guilty in Franklin County Superior Court to causing the death of Griffyn Smith of Dixfield, also 19. The state dismissed a charge of operating under the influence resulting in death, in exchange for the plea.

Police said Buotte was driving drunk and under the influence of drugs when he crashed his car in Weld on May 31, 2018, killing Smith.

Smith was a four-time state champion wrestler at Dirigo High School in Dixfield. He earned an associate degree in precision machining and had planned to enlist in the U.S. Navy.

Deputy District Attorney James Andrews told the court that Buotte, then 18, was driving a 2008 Toyota Corolla at 71 mph in a 35-mph zone when he lost control of the car at about 11:30 p.m. on West Side Road in Weld. Smith was a passenger in the back seat. The car started to spin and rolled over several times. It hit a tree and the roof imploded and came down on Smith. The car continued to spin and Smith was ejected. The cause of Smith's death was blunt-force trauma, Andrews said.

Evidence showed that Buotte had been drinking alcohol and had snorted an opioid painkiller — hydrocodone — and had a prescription medicine in his system.

He had a blood-alcohol level of 0.138% about two hours after the crash, Andrews said. The legal threshold for adults 21 and over is 0.08.

Defense attorney Jeffrey Wilson said Buotte disagreed with some of the state's evidence, including that he attempted to leave the scene and burned evidence. Wilson had filed motions to suppress evidence, but Buotte told him not to go through with them because he wanted to take responsibility for his actions, Wilson said.

Andrews argued for Buotte to serve three years, while Wilson argued for nine months and a day.

"Ethyn has the rest of his life to live and my son has none," said Smith's mother, Cheryl Smith. She said her family has shown compassion toward Buotte.

"It is only fair he get the full amount," Smith said, meaning the plea agreement's three-year cap.

Cindy Smith Prakash told the court her nephew was killed by Buotte's "intentional, selfish and senseless" actions. In a cruel twist of fate, it was on his parents' wedding anniversary, she said. The car Buotte was driving was unsafe and had two doughnut tires on it, she said.

"I can't imagine the terror that Griffyn experienced (before his death)," Prakash said, in tears. "Griffyn actually cared about you, Ethyn, when others didn't."



Ethyn Buotte enters Franklin County Superior Court in Farmington Friday morning for his sentencing. *Sun Journal photo by Russ Dillingham*

A caseworker for Buotte said for the past six to nine months he has not only worked hard to better himself, he has set some goals, including to speak to youths to help them not make the mistakes he made.

Buotte had started to take control of his life, Wilson said, and went back and finished high school. Buotte was barely an adult at the time of the crash, and is very remorseful, his attorney said.

Buotte spoke directly to Errin and Cheryl Smith, Griffyn's parents, and apologized more than once to the family, and said he recognized that was not enough. He thinks of Griffyn constantly and wishes he could undo that night. He also apologized to his family and the community.

"I will never be able to make this right," he said. "I want to reach out to young adults to keep them from doing the same things I did."

Before he was taken into custody, Buotte spoke with Smith's family privately. It ended with a handshake from Smith's father and a hug from Smith's mother.

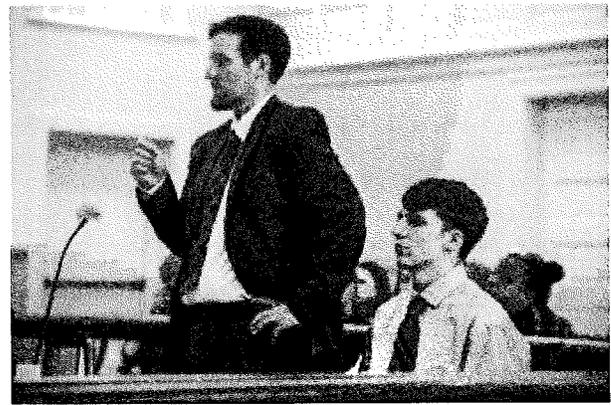
Cheryl Smith went over and hugged Buotte's family.

Public hearing Monday on proposed Rumford budget

H.S. track and field: Edward Little's Olivia Jalbert hopes to add to season's PRs at state meet
filed under:

court, Farmington Maine

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Ethyn Buotte, right, listens as his attorney, Jeffrey Wilson, addresses Justice Robert Muller in Franklin County Superior Court in Farmington on Friday morning. *Sun Journal photo by Russ Dillingham*