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Testimony of Rep. Anne Graham in support of
**LD 2237, An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding
Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and my esteemed colleagues on the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Representative Anne Graham and I serve the communities of North Yarmouth and Gray, House District 105. I stand in strong support of **LD 2237, "An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources."** My testimony focuses on Part B, Section B-1 Crisis Receiving Centers.

We use the word Crisis to describe many situations in our world from economic crisis, environmental crisis or global crisis. My focus is on the crisis that happened in our own backyard that resulted in eighteen people being killed. What is a crisis? Crisis can be defined as "a time of intense difficulty, trouble or danger. Crisis can also be defined as the turning point of a disease when an important change takes place, indicating either recovery or death." This is where a Crisis Receiving Center can literally save the life of one person and possibly others.

In LD 2237, a Crisis Receiving Center is defined as "a center providing walk-in access to crisis services to individuals experiencing behavioral health, mental health and substance use challenges." I believe it is far more than that mere description. I had the opportunity, along with several other legislators, to visit the Living Room in Portland, Spruwink's Crisis Receiving Center. According to Spruwink's website, "the Living Room Crisis Center (LRCC) provides crisis care in a warm and welcoming environment in downtown Portland, providing an interim option between mobile crisis, law enforcement intervention, and the emergency department." I felt the warm and welcoming vibe at the center. It's not an emergency room and it is not a jail. It is not a social club. It is a place where an individual can feel safe and supported amid the storm of a crisis. The Living Room allows an individual to stay for around 24 hours while social workers and mental health providers help them stabilize and get the care they need.

Is it a panacea? No, but it is a crucial part of a successful care plan, fostering a safe place for folks to access appropriate resources. It is not a place for an individual experiencing an acute psychotic episode. One of the things a crisis receiving center can do is connect individuals with

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams. The ACT team offers a community-based approach to provide comprehensive psychiatric treatment and intensive case management to promote stability and well-being. It can also connect individuals with systems for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment.

“Crisis is a state of feeling; an internal experience of confusion and anxiety to the degree that formerly successful coping mechanisms fail us and ineffective decisions and behaviors take their place. As a result, the person in crisis may feel confused, vulnerable, anxious, afraid, angry, guilty, hopeless and helpless.”¹ When an individual is in crisis, a Crisis Receiving Center is where they can connect and feel safe. It is a bridge to stabilization and recovery. That is what we need now.

I strongly support the establishment of a Crisis Receiving Center (CRC) in Lewiston based on the model of the Living Room. I do not, however, support a large expansion of this model in other communities at this time. I believe in the “one step at a time” approach. Let’s stand up a strong CRC in Lewiston where the trauma of October 25th still casts a deeply painful cloud over the community. We can then move forward with a strategic plan to bring Crisis Receiving Centers to other communities across our beautiful state to provide this vital service.

I thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ <https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/document-media/CrisisIntervention.pdf>