



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE

Working together to promote quality lives

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and good members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Betsy Sweet and I am here on behalf of the Behavioral Health Community Collaborative – community based mental agencies that serve over 70 percent of the people in Maine receiving mental health services. We support a 72 hour waiting period, but we are neither for nor against LD 2224.

While we support the efforts to make our state safer through an extreme risk protection order, tying mental health and mental health determinations to whether or not someone is safe enough to have guns is a) incredibly stigmatizing the 94% majority of people with mental illness who are much more likely to be the victim of a violent crime than a perpetrator and b) demands that police and law enforcement determine someone's mental health status and demands that a mental health provider determine how dangerous someone is. This is a switch of roles both unfair to the professionals and rife with the opportunity for big – and potentially deadly – errors in judgement.

We ask that you enact an Extreme Risk Protection Order that takes mental health out of the equation and only looks at the question of whether someone is a danger to themselves or others, as is done in at least 12 other states.

We also want to support the parts of this bill that call for a receiving center and a change in the way we pay for mobile crisis services. Both of these things are needed, but there is no way that the very limited scope of service or funding in these two critical areas is even near adequate. The request does not meet the moment we are in, when Maine people and the vast majority of legislators understand that it is THIS moment that requires systemic and historic levels of investment in our community mental health system – which has been under resourced for decades. Speaker Talbot Ross's legislation has a much more appropriate level of investment that will provide statewide access for Maine families who are in dire need of services.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.