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Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Testimony in Support of
The Governor's Supplemental Budget – LD 209

January 23rd, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Gattine, and Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of both the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services. My name is Adam Bloom-Paicopolos. I am a resident of Wells and am proud to serve as the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine (the Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association representing Maine's community-based behavioral health agencies who provide much-needed services to over 80,000 children, adults, and families annually. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of the Governor's Supplemental Budget, LD 209.

The Alliance recognizes the challenging budget environment we are in and appreciates the Governor's supplemental budget proposal to address the \$118 million MaineCare funding shortfall. We also appreciate the ongoing collaboration between providers, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Office of Behavioral Health. As you know, MaineCare is the backbone of our state's behavioral health care system, providing critical resources so that Mainers across the state can access the care they need. For behavioral health providers, MaineCare is the lifeline that enables the delivery of lifesaving services to address the growing mental health and substance use disorder needs in our state.

Without the emergency passage of this supplemental budget, our providers, as well as the broader MaineCare provider community, are concerned that this funding shortfall would result in MaineCare payment delays. The impact of such delays would be devastating and far-reaching on our behavioral health system. Providers rely on timely reimbursement to sustain operations—paying their staff and frontline essential workers, keeping doors open, and managing programs to meet ever-growing demand. These challenges impact not just our providers, but the people we serve each day.

By funding this shortfall, the supplemental budget ensures that providers can continue to receive timely payments, maintain stability, and deliver high-quality care to our communities without interruption.

That said, alongside the Essential Care & Support Workforce Partnership, the Alliance is deeply concerned over the Department's decision to not implement cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) law in either budget as required by state law.

After two years of successful COLA applications, a core piece of the Department's nationally recognized Rate Reform system supported by the current Administration, the Legislature, and countless stakeholders, this decision came as a shock to the MaineCare provider community. **Further, the Administration's recent Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to improve our children's behavioral health system explicitly required annual COLAs for community behavioral health providers in line with state law as one of the agreement's pillars.**¹

Providers rely on these COLAs during years between rate determination cycles to give wage increases for essential care and support workers and ensure that services are maintained. After years, sometimes decades of neglect, COLAs enabled MaineCare reimbursement rates to begin catching up. At a time when our state is continuing to experience a direct care workforce shortage, both in behavioral health and across other services, these COLAs are invaluable to providers.

The Alliance respectfully urges the committees to not accept the line in the Governor's biennial budget proposal that alters how COLAs are assessed and to pass a budget that fully funds MaineCare COLAs – maintaining the Legislature's deeply appreciated commitment to supporting our state's essential care workforce.

Additionally, the Alliance is concerned over the lack of funding in proposed budgets to facilitate the full implementation of the state's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program, now slated to begin on March 1st. To enable all five of the state's approved CCBHCs to fully participate in the model that carries a significant enhanced federal match, an additional \$2 million in funding will be needed. CCBHCs are a transformative and bipartisan approach to community behavioral health that have already begun to improve access and address long-standing gaps in care across the state from York County up to Aroostook County. CCBHCs have also been shown to be effective at generating cost savings across the country through timely access to care, and reductions in ED utilization and law enforcement encounters.ⁱⁱ We respectfully ask the committees to consider this funding in the biennial budget.

By addressing the MaineCare shortfall now and committing to these critical investments in the ongoing budget conversations, we can continue the momentum towards building an essential care workforce and a behavioral health system that meets the needs of every individual and family in Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon and for your leadership and commitment to the health and mental wellbeing of your constituents and our communities.

Respectfully,



Adam Bloom-Paicopolos, MPP
Executive Director

¹ U.S. Department of Justice. Settlement Agreement Between the United States of America and the State of Maine. December 2024.

ⁱⁱ National Council for Mental Wellbeing. 2024 CCBHC Impact Report. June 2024.