



Testimony Against LD 210 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027.

February 14, 2025

Good morning, Senator Routundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations and Health & Human Services Committee.

My name is Kate Marble, and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker residing in Temple, Maine. As the Clinical Director of Health Affiliates Maine, a statewide behavioral health agency based in Auburn, I have the privilege of leading an organization that serves over 10,000 Mainers. Our agency provides case management, outpatient counseling and psychiatric medication management. I appreciate the opportunity to address the biannual budget priorities.

While I recognize and respect the decision to maintain the status quo for the time being, I am deeply concerned that this budget, coming after months of discussions focused on building resilience—following the devastating mass shooting in Lewiston—fails to reflect the transformative change that our citizens urgently need. What began as a commitment to creating a comprehensive system of care for adults seems to have been sidelined in favor of addressing the Department of Justice lawsuit by adding children's services. While I wholeheartedly support expanding services for children, this shift has come at the expense of adult services, stretching an already taxed workforce even thinner. We cannot afford to sacrifice one population's needs over another.

What Maine requires is a holistic approach to care—one that supports individuals from childhood through their senior years. Our citizens deserve a government that consistently prioritizes their health and well-being, and this commitment must include ensuring fair and sustainable support for the healthcare and behavioral health workforce. These professionals often work multiple jobs just to make ends meet, and it is impossible to maintain a high-quality, innovative system of care when the people who deliver that care are worn out and underpaid. The need for fair rates for quality care is urgent. We cannot afford to revisit reimbursement rates every decade after agencies close and citizens are left to navigate a broken system, too often turning to emergency rooms as their only option.

I strongly urge you to listen to the experts who have submitted testimony, many of whom have expressed concern that this budget does not adequately address the immediate and real needs of Mainers.



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Additionally, I ask you to reconsider the proposed cuts to the two crisis receiving centers. It is my sincerest hope that we never have to rely on such centers. I wish we lived in a world where prevention services were the norm, and timely care could be provided at a reasonable cost. But that is not our reality. Funding these centers is an investment in long-term savings for hospitals and law enforcement and, more importantly, a commitment to providing the right support at the right time. From our experience referring clients to the Portland centers, we've seen firsthand how these services defer emergency calls, police intervention, and emergency room visits—literally saving lives. Meanwhile, rural communities, where access to services is already limited, are unable to benefit from these critical resources, pushing us deeper into reliance on more expensive and less effective systems.

The current narrative that cuts to vital health and behavioral health services are our only option is misleading. I firmly believe there are alternative paths to explore. We must look at changes in the state's tax code or consider reallocating funds within the existing budget to ensure the health, safety, and resilience of Maine's people.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to finding meaningful solutions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Marble LCSW". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Marble, LCSW

Clinical Director