

My name is Kristina Colby, and I live in downtown Augusta, where I regularly witness individuals walking down my street, often under the influence of substances that have taken a significant toll on their lives. It is deeply heartbreaking to witness this daily struggle, knowing they are unable to access the critical support they need due to the limited availability of detox beds.

This issue hits particularly close to home, as I am also the Program Director for ENSO Recovery, an outpatient substance use treatment facility and provider of recovery housing. We are frequently overwhelmed with calls from individuals seeking detox beds—people who hold onto a fragile sense of hope, if only for a moment. Unfortunately, I must inform each one of them that we do not offer detox services, and I deliver this message with a heavy heart.

At ENSO Recovery, our mission has always been to serve those less fortunate. Our funding is entirely reliant on Mainecare or grants, as we do not accept commercial insurance. However, due to the inadequate reimbursement rates for detox services in Maine, no agency can survive on Mainecare-funded detox beds alone. In addition to detox-related calls, we also receive requests from individuals seeking recovery housing and outpatient treatment, not realizing that they first need detox. I've spoken with many people in need, only to have to tell them they must go through detox before we can offer recovery housing. Sadly, I often never hear from them again. I frequently hear, "I've tried that place already, but they don't have any beds."

While I can direct individuals to seek hospital care, there are strict requirements for medical detox, leaving many of your constituents without options. So, where do we send them? What are we supposed to tell people who are clinging to a fragile hope and bravery, only to be met with "I'm sorry, we don't offer detox"?

The reason we don't offer detox services is simple: it's not financially sustainable. Without an increase in reimbursement rates, I fear the consequences for our communities will be severe, leading to more overdoses and fatalities. The diminishing availability of detox beds will leave individuals with no hope or options for recovery.

I strongly urge the members of this committee to support LD 514. We all know someone affected by substance use. I ask you to think of that individual, as they're faced with constant barriers to finding detox services to begin their recovery journey. By increasing reimbursement rates for detox services, we can offer support to so many more people in need. I dream of a day when ENSO can provide a full continuum of care—from detox to PHP, residential treatment, outpatient services, and recovery housing. But to make that a reality, we need the necessary financial support.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions to the best of my ability.

Sincerely,
Kristina Colby
Program Director - ENSO Recovery