

Heath Human Services Committee Testimony – March 10, 2025

Testimony in Favor of LD 514

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Tom Doherty. I'm a resident of Portland and I'm here today to testify in favor of LD514. I'm the executive director of Milestone Recovery located in Portland and Old Orchard Beach. Milestone has been working in substance abuse recovery since 1967 and has been operating a detox since 2000. We serve MaineCare clients and the uninsured. Detox is an important part of our continuum of care which begins with our street outreach teams then moves to our emergency substance abuse shelter and then hopefully into detox and beyond into our residential and outpatient programs all focused at the most vulnerable people in our community.

We recently moved and expanded our detox to a new facility. We received very strong support from the federal, state county governments and private philanthropy to purchase and renovate a new building. In the past 12 months we have served clients from all 16 counties in Maine. We have been working aggressively to try and understand how we can sustain the program. We have worked with our partners at the Office of Behavioral Health, explored alternative funding streams and continue to cut costs to try to survive on the MaineCare funding we receive, which combined with a grant from the Office of Behavioral Health is our only consistent source of revenue.

Each year our Maine Care Cost Report shows a bed night cost \$704.00 per person per night. The cost is driven by 24-hour nursing, physicians, counselors and the support staff, all required by state and MaineCare policy. Against the \$704 that it costs per night we can collect, \$403 from MaineCare leaving a gap of \$301. We also receive funding from the Office of Behavioral Health targeting the uninsured.

After we opened the new facility, we took on \$1.1 million in debt to cover operating costs. Recently we received a generous grant from the Maine Recovery Council of \$1.1 million. These one-time funds will get us to the end of this calendar year and allow us to stay open. These funding streams are one-time opportunities that we are deeply thankful for. We're using this time to look for any possible efficiencies we can find and seek to sustain funding to allow us to stay open for our particularly vulnerable folks, many of them unhoused.

As we reached out to our colleagues across the state for advice, we found all of us have the same costs and are in similar precarious financial positions. It is for all these reasons that an increase in MaineCare funding is essential to keep the detox beds we have all worked very hard to create

Maine has much to be proud of with our declining overdoses and deaths. Treatment is a key part of that success and the first step in treatment is Detox. Keeping existing beds open is essential so we do not backslide and lose more of our neighbors, family members and friends. We ask you to consider sustaining these important beds we have all created together.

Respectfully Submitted,

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