

Bruce Noddin
Auburn, Me 04210
(207) 520-9180

LD 779
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LD 753- An act to support an Aroostook Adult Treatment and Recovery Court.

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in strong support of LD 753, An act to support an Aroostook Adult Treatment and Recovery Court. My name is Bruce Noddin with The Maine Re-Entry Network or MERN, a state-wide non-profit focused on providing peer recovery support and coordinated community resources for hundreds of individuals returning to Maine communities from prison, jail, and treatment courts. I am also a member of the State Workforce Board appointed by Governor Mills (2022) and the Maine Recovery Council, appointed by Senator Jackson (2022).

More importantly, I am a person in long term recovery and a person who lives with mental health challenges.

I am so excited to talk about the single best treatment and recovery opportunity available to criminal justice involved men and women in the State of Maine. Throughout the state, folks who are justice involved, due to substance-use-related actions and facing prison time, have a chance to participate in their local adult treatment court. An evidence-based approach to recovery and recidivism that's made available throughout our state, except for Aroostook County.

Over the last five years we've witnessed the positive ripple effects of the recovery and personal support provided by the treatment court model as participants first learn how to live without substances and then start a journey of discovering who they really are and realizing their full potential. During this 18-20 month (average) journey, the court participants are supported and encouraged by a dedicated multidisciplinary team that is laser focused on their collective goals; making certain the each participant is ready to live a life free of substances, is ready to face life's challenges without the need for substances, is connected to the community, and that each participant has the opportunity to live a fulfilling life.

Shouldn't folks in Aroostook County have this recovery model available to them, their families, and their communities? Folks who commence from Maine's treatment courts are engaged in education, vocational training, building a future of meaningful employment, and otherwise contributing to Maine's under-resourced workforce. Additionally, and maybe most importantly, families are more likely to be reunited, and more children have parents who are actively engaged in their lives.

Like all areas of Maine, Aroostook County faces the community and family challenges presented by substance use. Like all other areas of Maine, Aroostook County deserves this practical, effective, and life-changing, community approach to substance-use challenges.

We hope that this distinguished will move forward and recommend that LD 753 "ought to pass" Thanks to this new treatment court, justice impacted men and women will bolster Aroostook County's under resourced workforce, contribute to their local and state economy, pay taxes, provide for family needs, and pay restitution, fines, and child support. The results for Aroostook County? A better prepared workforce, families stay together, more engaged parents, more community engaged citizens, and safer communities & neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time and kind consideration!

Bruce Noddin, Maine Reentry Network (207) 520-9180