



**Testimony of Christine Wyman, LCSW, LADC, CCS, MaineHealth
In Support of LD 604, "An Act to Ensure Access to Concurrent Methadone
Treatment and Intensive Outpatient Programs"
Thursday, March 13, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Christine Wyman, Clinical Director at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 604, "An Act to Ensure Access to Concurrent Methadone Treatment and Intensive Outpatient Programs."

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. As part of our vision of "Working Together So Maine's Communities are the Healthiest in America," MaineHealth, which includes MaineHealth Behavioral Health (MHBH), is committed to creating a seamless system of behavioral healthcare across Maine, coordinating hospital psychiatric care with community-based treatment services, and providing better access to behavioral healthcare through integration with primary care.

MHBH serves as the leader of MaineHealth's effort to address the substance use epidemic. I am proud to say that in Fiscal Year 2024, we served 2,240 patients with opioid use disorder. Our multi-faceted approach involves prevention, education, and treatment across the entire MaineHealth footprint, including intensive treatment "hubs" run by MHBH and intermediate and ongoing maintenance level treatment in primary and specialty care practices located in each of our local health services areas.

It is through this lens that we strongly support LD 604. Currently, clients receiving methadone treatment are not able to participate in an intensive outpatient program (IOP) for their substance use disorder (SUD) because of MaineCare reimbursement restrictions. Importantly, Methadone clinics in Maine do not provide intensive therapy, like a patient would receive in an IOP. An IOP, by definition, needs to meet at least 9 hours per week and can go up to 19 hours per week and includes individual counseling, group psychotherapy, group training/education, activity groups, family involvement, and care coordination.

This means that clients in an IOP must discontinue therapy with their current therapist if they want to receive methadone as a medication for their SUD. This disrupts the therapeutic process for the client and may create a situation where they either do not seek the medication they would benefit from the most or they do not engage in the needed therapy.

We receive calls from individuals receiving methadone on a semi-regular basis looking to engage in an IOP or SUD outpatient counseling and they cannot because of this MaineCare restriction. Additionally, we have clients, often with fentanyl dependence, who would be best served by receiving methadone treatment, but they have declined because they knew they could not continue to receive counseling from MHBH. This restriction also directly impacts an extremely vulnerable population – pregnant women. Because we provide specialty counseling for pregnant

and parenting women, we have had several women who have wanted to receive counseling from us but were unable to because they were receiving methadone from a methadone clinic.

Our practice cared for a single mother who had a history of heroin use as well as significant trauma, including being sexually assaulted, domestic violence, and surviving a serious car accident. She transitioned out of our care, and in 2023, she relapsed and acquired legal charges. She wanted to come back into services with us while also receiving methadone treatment, but she was unable to because of this MaineCare restriction. She told us our counseling services were pivotal to her recovery previously and felt she was able to receive therapy targeted toward treating her SUD, learning healthy coping skills and navigating parenthood, all of which she was not receiving from the methadone clinic. Sadly, I have heard that she has since relapsed.

This restriction is hurting our most vulnerable, and we urge you to support the legislation before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.