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*Testimony of Representative Laura Supica sponsoring*

## **LD 604, An Act to Ensure Access to Concurrent Methadone Treatment and Intensive Outpatient Programs**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Laura Supica, and I represent House District 22, which includes part of Bangor. I am here today to present **LD 604, An Act to Ensure Access to Concurrent Methadone Treatment and Intensive Outpatient Programs**.

I want to be frank that I am still learning about this issue, but it is something that I feel will greatly benefit individuals who are suffering from opioid use disorder in our state.

LD 604 prohibits the Department of Health and Human Services from prohibiting or restricting MaineCare coverage for individuals receiving methadone maintenance for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) while they are concurrently enrolled in intensive outpatient programs (IOP).

Currently, individuals receiving methadone treatment for opioid use disorder are required to be enrolled in an IOP because these services working in tandem are proven to be effective in treating opioid use disorder. However, MaineCare considers it to be “double billing” if an individual receives methadone treatment for opioid use disorder at one facility while enrolling in an intensive outpatient therapy at another facility. As a result, individuals enrolled in MaineCare are forced to receive their IOP at the same institution that provides their methadone treatment.

While enrolling in methadone treatment and an IOP at the same facility can provide convenience, this limits the consumer choice for individuals on MaineCare. By forcing MaineCare enrollees to receive their IOP at their chosen methadone treatment center, they lose control of their care, and it could negatively impact the quality of their care.

IOPs are can be very effective in treating substance use disorder because they strike a balance between structured treatment and personal independence, allowing patients to feel in control of their care. They provide individuals with the counseling, peer support and skill-building exercises needed for long-term recovery—all while allowing them to continue working, caring for their families and staying engaged in their communities.

However, if patients on MaineCare are limited to receiving their IOP at the same location of their methadone treatment, the effectiveness of the IOP has potential to decrease. Substance use disorder is a disease, and we know that many individuals will relapse after treatment. By negating an individual's choice of where they receive their treatment, individuals can feel detached from their care. Treatment for substance use disorder requires individuals to be invested in their treatment, and eliminating their choice as a healthcare consumer can reduce the effectiveness of their treatment.

If we want to combat opioid addiction effectively, we must invest in programs that meet people where they are. Expanding access to IOPs outside of methadone clinics means more recovery, fewer overdoses and stronger communities.

We don't do this for any other treatment in healthcare. There is never an instance where we require an individual to see a specialist that is connected to their primary care physician, nor do we mandate that individuals receive their vaccinations at the same pharmacy that they fill their prescriptions. There is no reason to restrict people receiving methadone treatment to also receiving their mandatory IOP at that same facility. Our healthcare system allows for patients to have a choice in where they are treated and who they are treated by, and this should not be any different for individuals with opioid use disorder on MaineCare.

I encourage you to vote ought to pass on LD 604, and allow individuals to take control of their care by providing MaineCare coverage to concurrent methadone treatments and intensive outpatient programs of their choice.

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