



Northern Light Health
Government Relations
43 Whiting Hill Road
Brewer, Maine 04412

Office 207.861.3282
Fax 207.861.3044

**LD 1426 Resolve, to Expand Child Assertive Community Treatment
Testimony in Support**

April 8, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am speaking today on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations in support this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with more than 10,000 employees statewide.

Today my testimony focuses on Northern Light Acadia Hospital. The care we provide to our patients is rooted in compassion and respect. We an acute care, short-stay psychiatric hospital licensed for 100 inpatient beds. We provide a full continuum of mental and behavioral health services for children, teens, and adults. Our interdisciplinary care teams work closely together to wrap our patients with the comprehensive care they deserve. We meet patients where they are. Whether in our offices or virtually from the comfort of their home through tele-health, Acadia makes patient access easy. Acadia Hospital's services reach deep into our communities through many specialized programs including our Behavioral Health Home, Opioid Health Home, military veteran programming, Integrated Behavioral Health in primary care practices, and school-based clinician services.

Our clinicians and patients are impacted by the gaps in the community behavioral health care continuum. The bill before you today address a significant gap – the lack of child assertive community treatment (ACT) teams in Bangor (and Lewiston). Children's Behavioral health ACT teams are multidisciplinary teams that provide intensive community-based services to children with significant behavioral health needs with a goal to improve patient functioning in the least restrictive setting, while strengthening family, school and community relationships.

The length of stay on our Acadia inpatient pediatric units has at times been extensive while we refer for outpatient services in order to keep the child safe when they return home. Access to case management and behavioral health home programs is possible, however, access to programs with in-home support components is abysmal with wait times exceeding three months in Penobscot County for this service. There are over 100

Northern Light Health
Acadia Hospital
A.R. Gould Hospital
Blue Hill Hospital
C.A. Dean Hospital
Eastern Maine Medical Center
Home Care & Hospice
Inland Hospital
Maine Coast Hospital
Mayo Hospital
Mercy Hospital
Northern Light Health Foundation
Northern Light Pharmacy
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

kids on the waitlist as of the most recent data available in January 2025. This can, at times, lead to a cycle of readmissions to emergency departments and psychiatric hospitals for children who are unable to access any other level of care.

The addition of a children's ACT team to supplement the pending addition of a community psychiatric residential treatment facility will add critical access points for our most vulnerable children. ACT has been shown to reduce the severity of psychiatric symptoms, improve general functioning and reduce the duration and frequency of psychiatric hospital admissions.

By obtaining access to this level of care, we will decrease wait times in emergency departments for psychiatric beds by enabling hospitals to discharge children home with significant supports in place. Additionally, for those children who have benefited from out of home treatment in a residential or hospital setting, they will be able to continue care through the ACT model, while also involving the family in order to sustain progress in their care setting.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this important legislation.