



**Testimony of Kelly Barton, MaineHealth
In Strong Support of
LD 721, “Resolve, to Support the Full Implementation of Certified
Community Behavioral Health Clinics in the State”
April 9, 2025**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Kelly Barton, President of MaineHealth Behavioral Health, and I am here to testify in strong support of LD 721, “Resolve, to Support the Full Implementation of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics in the State.”

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.

Through our Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC), MHBH provides a broad range of community behavioral health services by coordinating with other community resources and organizations. We focus on coordinated care and the use of evidence-based practices for individuals across their lifespan, regardless of ability to pay. Our CCBHCs in York, Knox, and Waldo Counties are proving to be highly successful at meeting the needs of our communities, and LD 721 provides \$2 million in additional funding to ensure that this work can continue for our CCBHCs and the others across the state.

By partnering with several organizations in the area, including Sweetser, Spurwink, the Emergency Departments at Pen Bay and Waldo Hospitals, and even the Waldo County Sheriff’s Office, our CCBHCs in Knox and Waldo Counties have been able to increase the number of clients served by 16% since between Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024, and of those the number of children served increased by 45%. And clients had a greater access to psychiatry (10%) and therapy (48%) over that same time period.

Care coordinators are a key to the success of the CCBHCs, supporting access to care and providing additional resources and services. Care coordinators work with clients from all our services and have connected with over 1,000 clients this past year. They are the face of the CCBHC in the community and act as a bridge of support and resource connection for clients on the waitlist for services, and because of the CCBHC funding, get to advocate for populations that need more support. As one of our clients recently stated: “When I first reached out to Maine Health, I was at a new rock bottom in life.... I knew I needed help but I had no idea how to go about it. I made a lot of phone calls, The Care Coordinator at MaineHealth was by far the most

responsive, understanding, empathetic, hope inspiring person I came across. He was incredibly personable and human, I felt heard, seen and understood. Having him advocate for me and coordinate how I move forward with the services was literally life saving for me, and gave me hope when things couldn't have felt more hopeless.... I imagine having Care Coordinators at the frontlines is an incredible asset for the MaineHealth program, and incredibly helpful for anybody seeking help. Thanks for hearing me.” Care coordinators would not be possible without the CCBHC.

Clients tell us about the difference these services are making in their lives by not only receiving the substance use disorder and mental health treatment that they so desperately need, but also that we're able to connect them with other support services, like enrolling in adequate insurance coverage and receiving domestic violence support. As a result of the CCBHC model and funding structure, clinicians and staff have received specialized training in serving Military Service members, veterans and their families. They have also undergone extensive training, supervision and ongoing coaching in other evidenced based treatment models such as trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy. This comprehensive approach ensures that the team is well equipped to address the unique needs of clients and their community.

As this Committee knows very well, access to behavioral health services across Maine continues to be a significant challenge. The data show that CCBHCs are starting to successfully address the gaps in our system. But without the critical funding provided by LD 721, it is likely that our CCBHCs and others across the state will not be able to continue this transformational work when our grant funding expires. With that said, we strongly urge you to support the legislation before you today.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.