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Testimony in support LD 721, a Resolve to Support Full Implementation of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics in the State of Maine.

April 9, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Carla Stockdale. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and the Chief Clinical Officer for Kennebec Behavioral Health.

I am here today to ask for your support for LD 721.

The purpose of LD 721 is to provide the final, yet modest, funding needed to support the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) in our state. This funding is essential for sustaining and expanding our capacity to deliver much-needed behavioral health services to individuals and families across Maine.

At Kennebec Behavioral Health, we are proud to be part of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) initiative. As a community mental health center serving central and rural Maine, we see firsthand the impact this model has on improving access to care and reducing treatment barriers. Despite these efforts, the demand for services remains high. Last year, we served over 18,000 individuals across a wide range of programs, including residential care, crisis intervention, clinic-based services, and in-home community supports. Yet, we continue to face a growing need, with 1,220 individuals currently on our waiting list and 500 new service requests each month. While we serve individuals from all 16 counties, the majority of requests come from Kennebec and Somerset counties.

The growing need for access to behavioral health services is especially pressing in counties like Somerset, where in 2023, the ratio of the total population-to-mental-health-providers was 530:1, the worst ratio in the state. For example, in Kennebec County and in the state of Maine, the ratio was 180:1. Source: CMS, National Provider Registration Registry - 2023

This is where LD 721 comes into play. By providing additional funding to the state's CCBHCs, this legislation will enable us to improve how we deliver and manage care. Specifically, it will allow us to strengthen our front-end connections with clients and build clinical capacity, ultimately reducing our wait lists and increasing access to care through providing real-time services. Our goal is to eliminate our outpatient services waitlist list by the end of the first year, for our clients, your constituents ensuring that no one has to wait for the care they need. But to achieve this, we need your help.

With the support from LD 721, we will be able to invest in and expand our workforce through the CCBHC—particularly in recruiting and retaining nurses, clinical social workers, and psychiatric providers. These positions are the most difficult to fill, and the resources provided through this bill, alongside the enhanced FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentage), will allow us to close the gap in staffing. This will enable us to recruit the professionals we need to reduce waiting times and, most importantly, improve access to care for the people of Maine.

Kennebec Behavioral Health respectfully urges this Committee to vote in support of LD 721 and help us meet the growing demand for behavioral health services in Maine. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.