

Good morning, my name is Bob Staples, president of the Brett M. Staples Brain Disorder Awareness Coalition, and I am here today to strongly support Maine LD 1239. This critical piece of legislation addresses some of the most pressing challenges within our mental health system. As someone deeply concerned about the accessibility and quality of mental health care in Maine, I believe this bill will make a significant impact.

I want to take a moment to speak from personal experience. Some time ago, my family faced a heartbreaking situation when my son urgently needed psychiatric care. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we were unable to secure a psychiatric bed for him. The lack of available resources left us in a desperate and helpless situation, trying to navigate a system that was overburdened and opaque. This bill directly addresses issues like the one we faced—by requiring psychiatric hospitals to be transparent about the reasons they decline admissions and to report real-time bed availability, it will make it easier for families to find the care their loved ones urgently need.

LD 1239 focuses on improving transparency and accountability in psychiatric hospitals across the state. It requires these hospitals to provide detailed written explanations when they decline referrals for emergency admissions. This means that hospitals will now be obligated to explain the specific reasons for refusal and what circumstances could lead to reconsideration. For families and individuals struggling to access care, this increased transparency can be a lifeline, offering clarity during what is often a very stressful and confusing time.

Moreover, the bill mandates daily reporting of inpatient bed capacity, occupancy, and locations, which will be made available in real-time on a publicly accessible website. This is a game-changer. It ensures that referring hospitals and families can access critical information about available resources when they need it most. It also gives us the data needed to identify statewide trends and patterns in psychiatric bed utilization, which will allow us to make more informed decisions about where to allocate resources and how to improve our system.

Another key provision is the biennial report prepared by the Department of Health and Human Services. This report will highlight deficiencies in the

mental health service system, recommend improvements, and focus on building a more collaborative and efficient network of care. By addressing these gaps, LD 1239 lays the groundwork for better mental health outcomes for all Mainers.

In short, LD 1239 offers real, tangible solutions to improve the mental health system in Maine. It prioritizes transparency, accountability, and the efficient use of resources, which will ultimately lead to better access to care for those who need it most. I urge you to support this bill and help build a stronger, more responsive mental health system for Maine. Thank you.