



## **LD 1745 An Act to Stabilize Residential Treatment Capacity for Children and Youth in Maine**

### **Testimony in Support April 28, 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 in support of this bill on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 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.

Northern Light Health actively participated with the stakeholder group established by LD 2009 last session; the group focused on addressing the challenge of long stays for youth in hospital emergency departments. The group met for many weeks resulting in the report you received from the department on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025. I have testified many times for many years about this crisis and the compelling need to establish the continuum of services that children need in the regions of the state where their families reside.

This bill reflects many of the discussions, challenges and solutions discussed last fall. During the stakeholder discussions we learned from providers about the ongoing challenge of residential facility closures. We agreed that information about closures would be important for this committee to understand, Section 1 of this bill directs the department to provide information about closures to this committee within 2 weeks of a provider discontinuing service. The bill also directs the department to convene a stakeholder group of child residential treatment providers to identify the short-term and long-term staffing and resources needs to ensure the sustainability of child residential treatment providers.

During our discussion workforce challenges combined with reimbursement challenges are a significant factor in residential facility closures. To prevent additional closures this bill creates an emergency stabilization fund with one-time resources to stabilize the children's residential care facility providers in danger of closing a facility or closing beds in a facility. We cannot erode our residential bed capacity any further as we work to stabilize these facilities

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Mercy Hospital  
Northern Light Health Foundation  
Northern Light Pharmacy  
Sebasticook Valley Hospital

Section 3 of the bill focuses on out of state and emergency department costs. The cost of out of state placement and the cost of long stay emergency department youth are ongoing and important questions for which the department has not provided detail. The cost to hospitals is not reflected in MaineCare spend as MaineCare does not provide any reimbursement beyond an acute emergency room encounter. Should this bill pass into law, Hospitals will need to work with the department to provide this data. MaineCare does have cost data for the out of state placements but has not provided this detail to the committee. This section bill directs the department to provide information on both data points.

We support this bill and thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.