

May 9, 2025

Good Morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed Health and Human Services Committee members. My name is April Kerr, and I am a resident of Farmington. I am here today to testify in favor of LD1843.

I am a person with lived experience when it comes to mental health challenges, and I know many of my peers have experienced the same things and, in some cases, worse, than I have. Hundreds of people every day are out there somewhere struggling to find their way through troublesome times with nowhere to go for support. No one to help them process their thoughts and feelings, or see any options to consider as a way out, and so they sit in agony and suffer. Suffering in silence can be deadly. Many of these people turn to unhealthy methods of coping, and some become suicidal. I know this because I used to be that someone. I didn't have anyone I felt I could go to that would help me work things out, or somewhere I could get away from it all for a little while. Don't get me wrong, I could leave the home for a while, and many times I did, but ended up either just going to a parking lot and sitting there alone wondering where to go or driving around aimlessly with tear-stained eyes or going to someone else's place where they would be drinking and/or doing drugs, or they were struggling worse than I was. One hour a week for counseling and 30 minutes every two months with my psychiatrist was not enough. Those times at 8,9, or 10 at night when there was no one to reach out to were the worst. I felt like the leftovers that kept getting pushed to the back of the refrigerator and left in the dark. You know, the ones that we take out from time to time and say "Oh, it's still good," but put it back, and then one day, when you are searching for something to eat, you come across this container that you can't even recognize what's inside anymore. It's lost its worth and even looks toxic because it is. It's too late to save it. This is what happens to so many people today. They have nowhere to go but to the back of the fridge, where they sit in the dark, not knowing how to get out.

A peer respite facility would help prevent people from becoming lost, unrecognizable, and toxic. It would bring hope and support as they found someone to guide them out of the dark. It would be an economical resource or a link to other resources. It would be a stepping stone to help them see a way out. A peer respite facility would be a light shining in the dark.

In closing, I urge you to pass LD1843.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

April Kerr  
Farmington