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*Testimony of Representative Amy Roeder introducing*  
**LD 1843, An Act to Provide Peer Respite for Individuals with Mental Health  
Care Needs**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Amy Roeder and I represent House District 23, which includes a portion of Bangor. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of **LD 1843, An Act to Provide Peer Respite for Individuals with Mental Health Care Needs**.

This bill would require the Department of Health and Human Services to provide peer respite services and establish a peer respite center which must provide 24-hour services to individuals 18 years or older in need of voluntary, short-term mental health services.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Maine, 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year. In Maine, 223,000 adults have a mental health condition and 61,000 are considered to be a serious mental illness. Of the 65,000 adults in Maine who did not receive needed mental health care, 46.1% did not because of cost.<sup>1</sup>

Another serious issue outside of cost is our workforce shortage of mental health providers. According to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the total number of mental health providers in the state (counselors, substance use counselors, social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists) jumped from 7,494 in 2019 to 12,060 in November 2024. Despite this increase, patients are still waiting an exorbitant amount of time to receive help.

A survey published led by the National Association of Social Workers Maine Chapter found that nearly 13,000 patients were seeking an individual provider, mental health counseling or prescribing services in Maine, waiting an average of eight months for care. Patients with the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://namimaine.org/mental-health-in-maine/>

longest wait times were those waiting for mental health counseling, with more than 8,000 patients waiting for six to 24 months.<sup>2</sup>

Our 24-hour Maine Crisis Line is incredibly helpful, but people facing mental health crises need more support.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://themainemonitor.org/mental-health-providers/>