



Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN, I am the Vice President of Government Relations for Northern Light Health. I am here today speaking 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 nearly 10,000 employees statewide.

Northern Light Health participated in stakeholder group established by the 2023 Resolve, to Establish a Stakeholder Group to Address the Problem of Long Stays for Children and Adolescents in Hospital Emergency Departments. During the group discussions we provided information about long length of stay for youth in hospital emergency departments and long inpatient stays for youth at Northern Light Acadia Hospital due to the lack of community residential beds. During calendar year 2025 Northern Light Health hospital emergency departments cared for 153 long stay behavioral health youth medically cleared but waiting for discharge to behavioral health care and services.

In January of 2025 DHHS provided this committee with a formal report on the stakeholder group recommendations. The report documents the following:

Recommendations

1. Strategies to Limit the Length of Stay in Hospital Emergency Departments for Children and Adolescents Who Have Been Medically Cleared for Discharge

a. Stabilizing and Expanding Child and Youth Residential Capacity

The stakeholder group had extensive discussion related to the closure of residential beds in CY23-CY24. In order to prevent additional closures and to encourage the reopening of beds, the stakeholder group recommended DHHS outreach providers of residential services, inpatient psychiatric services, and community-based services to understand resource needs and release emergency funds to support intensive staffing levels necessary to serve individuals with acute staffing needs such as 2:1 and 3:1 staffing 24/7. Without the funding to support intensive staffing levels, providers are unable to safely accept children and adolescents or meet their support needs which contributes to long stay emergency department visits.

This bill implements the stakeholder group recommendation by providing one time funding to establish an emergency fund to stabilize children's residential care facility providers in danger of closing a facility or closing beds in a facility. We are in strong support of this funding and ask that you support this important legislation.

Thank you