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January 29, 2026

Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich presenting

**LD 2065, An Act to Provide One-time Funds to Support the Construction of a
Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility for At-risk Youth**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and honorable colleagues of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Lori Gramlich. I have the privilege of representing Old Orchard Beach and of serving as the Assistant House Majority Leader. Thank you for the opportunity to speak as a cosponsor in support of **LD 2065, An Act to Provide One-time Funds to Support the Construction of a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility for At-risk Youth**. This legislation represents a critical and long-overdue investment in Maine's behavioral health continuum for children and adolescents.

Maine continues to face a severe shortage of in-state psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) beds for youth under the age of 21 with complex behavioral health, psychiatric, and intellectual and developmental disability needs. As a result, the State has been forced to place children in out-of-state residential treatment facilities, often hundreds of miles away from their families, schools, communities and care coordinators. These placements are disruptive, costly and frequently result in poorer outcomes for children who need stability, connection and trauma-informed care close to home.

The proposed one-time appropriation is a necessary step toward addressing this gap. Construction of an in-state psychiatric residential treatment facility will allow Maine to retain responsibility for its most vulnerable youth, reduce reliance on out-of-state placements and ensure care is delivered in a manner consistent with Maine's values and standards.

This bill is especially important in light of Maine's statutory and regulatory commitments. The Department of Health and Human Services was directed to implement secure children's psychiatric residential treatment facility services by January 1, 2024, pursuant to Chapter 101 of the MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapters II and III, Section 107. The delivery model is required to provide secure behavioral health and intellectual and developmental disabilities PRTF services. Without

appropriate physical infrastructure, compliance with these requirements is not feasible. Capital investment is foundational to making these services a reality.

The consequences of an inadequate system of care for children with significant behavioral health needs are all too often tragic. While no single facility can prevent every tragedy, the absence of appropriate, secure, therapeutic residential options in Maine places children, families and communities at unacceptable risk. This legislation represents a proactive, solutions-oriented response to those systemic failures.

Importantly, investing in an in-state facility is also fiscally responsible. Out-of-state placements often come with higher per diem costs, additional transportation expenses and limited oversight. Building capacity within Maine strengthens accountability, improves care coordination with Maine providers and child welfare systems, and creates a more sustainable long-term model.

In closing, this bill is not simply about bricks and mortar. It is about fulfilling Maine's obligation to care for children with the most complex needs, keeping them closer to their families and supports, and aligning our infrastructure with our policy commitments. I urge the Committee to support this bill and the one-time funding necessary to move this critical project forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions for you.