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Testimony 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

Committee on Health and Human Services

January 29th, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Dr. Deirdre Burns, I am a pediatrician practicing in York County and have practiced in Cumberland County in the past. I am speaking to you in support of LD 2065 because I personally have witnessed the distress of families seeking inpatient psychiatric placement for their children. These are children in dire situations who are not safe to return home, and may wait days or weeks seeking a bed. I personally have cared for children waiting in the Emergency Department for an inpatient psychiatric bed.

Imagine a child in your life in crisis, desperately in need of high-level psychiatric care, and made to wait days and days in a windowless room or in a windowless hallway waiting for that help. While waiting, these children receive supportive care from doctors, nurses, and social workers, who want nothing more than for that child to be in a therapeutic setting where they can heal and make progress. These inpatient psychiatric beds are elusive and scarce, creating uncertainty as to when or if the child will be lucky enough to be placed. Hours and hours of case management time is spent making the calls to various facilities, getting on the wait lists, and calling back every day to let them know we still want the bed, and again calling to find out if we got the bed.

One argument against this bill is that children should be at home and not in a residential facility. I see parents who would love nothing more than to be able to have their child at home participating in intensive outpatient services, however their child is a threat to the safety of themselves, their family members, or the community. I have witnessed the heartbreak of parents who are unable to provide a round-the-clock safety watch for their child because at some point parents have to sleep or earn a living for their family. I have seen parents who have to put the safety and well-being of *all* children in the home first. I have spoken to parents who are physically overpowered by a child who is a threat to themselves and others. I have seen parents who have secured the funding for an in-home caregiver but cannot find anyone to fill the position.

A good day in Maine will be a day when we can't fill all of our pediatric inpatient psychiatric beds. I don't anticipate that day coming soon. Until then, we need more resources for these children who have the most need.

I ask that you vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 2065 and approve funding to construct a new psychiatric residential treatment facility for at-risk youth.

Deirdre Burns, MD, MPH, FAAP
Pediatrician