



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony in Support of

An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government – LD 2212

February 18, 2026

Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services: My name is Charlotte Warren. I am a resident of Hallowell, a policy associate at Moose Ridge Associates, and here to testify on behalf of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine (the Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association representing 34 of Maine's community-based behavioral health agencies who provide mental health and substance use services to over 120,000 children, adults, and families annually. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance's Executive Director, Adam Bloom-Paicopolos, I am here today to speak in support of LD 2212 and to offer additional comment on what is missing from the budget.

We sincerely appreciate that Governor Mills' administration has reflected some of the rising costs of care in its Office of Behavioral Health and MaineCare budget proposals. Additionally, we are deeply appreciative of the \$3,399,680 proposed for the establishment of a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF). This funding is vital for the completion of Maine's only PRTF which will fill a much needed gap in our continuum of care. These investments recognize real pressures facing our behavioral health system.

Unfortunately, this proposed budget does not address the ongoing crisis in Maine's child residential care facilities (CRCFs) that has resulted in Maine children being placed out-of-state for treatment or being boarded in emergency departments due to the strained and declining capacity of in-state CRCF agencies.

The Alliance wishes to thank members of the Health and Human Services committee for their unanimous vote on LD 2125 sponsored by Representative McCabe. The proposal establishes a one-time \$1 million emergency stabilization fund to prevent additional program closures and preserve remaining in-state capacity while waiting for the rate determination to be completed and implemented.

This funding is critical as Maine's remaining CRCF providers have been increasingly unable to staff programs that can safely accept many Maine youth due to a reimbursement rate that does not reflect high staff turnover and the actual costs needed to operate programs serving high acuity and complex needs. As a result, Maine has

lost almost 80% of its CRCF capacity over the last two decades, with over 100 beds and two additional programs closing in the past year alone. This has directly translated to over 60 Maine children in out-of-state placements as of April 2025 per the Department.

With just six CRCF providers left, we cannot afford to wait and send more Maine children to out-of-state facilities and or emergency department rooms. The \$1 million stabilization fund represents a crucial lifeline for remaining providers to access financial support to stay afloat while waiting for a new rate to be determined and implemented. The Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) is already a tremendous partner in being responsive to the needs of providers nearing closure to the best of their ability. This fund would be an additional tool in OBH's toolbox, and we have full faith in OBH's ability to leverage these funds to their maximum potential and intent to avoid additional closures and prevent unnecessary out-of-state placements while the rate determination process unfolds.

Maine's child residential system is at a breaking point. The one-time \$1 million stabilization fund will provide vital resources to address short-term challenges such as immediate staffing needs, retention efforts, and financial loss pressures to prevent additional closures during the rate determination process to be initiated by the Department that we are grateful was scheduled for 2026. This funding would provide immediate support and long-term sustainability for Maine to finally be able to care for its own children.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask that children's residential services be added to this budget in the form of the \$1 million stabilization fund unanimously passed by the Health and Human Services Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,



Charlotte Warren, M.A.Ed., M.S.W.