

In-Support LD 2212

Senator Rotundo, Rep. Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of both the Appropriations and Health & Human Services Committees, I'm John McAnuff, and I am Sweetser's CFO. I am here today in support of the Governor's supplemental budget as it relates to expanding in-state psychiatric residential treatment capacity.

As you know, Maine currently lacks a psychiatric residential treatment facility, or PRTF, for youth with the most acute behavioral health needs. **Sweetser has extensive experience operating intensive residential and psychiatric services. That experience has taught us two things: first, there is a clear clinical need for a PRTF in Maine; and second, these facilities are expensive to build, not because they are elaborate, but because they must be safe.**

Youth served in a PRTF present higher risks related to elopement, self-harm, and harm to others. As a result, the building itself becomes part of the treatment and safety plan.

Construction costs are driven by requirements such as:

- **Safety-First design of fixtures and furniture** to prevent residents from hurting themselves or others.
- **Controlled access** capabilities with high-tech security at all doors.
- **24/7 monitoring** to ensure the facility is watched around the clock.
- **Durable, reinforced buildings and specialized fencing** to handle heavy wear and tear, and to avoid climbing.

In addition, these facilities require infrastructure enhancements, including upgraded electrical service with full generator backup, specialized ventilation and cooling systems, because

operable windows are unsafe, fire protection upgrades, and full ADA accessibility. Many components also require specialized installation methods, increasing labor costs.

Sweetser has been intentional about cost containment with our construction partners. This project reuses an existing building on our campus rather than pursuing new construction, which would likely exceed ten million dollars. We are retaining usable systems, selecting modest finishes, and making design choices that reduce cost wherever safety allows. Even so, the clinical and regulatory requirements of a PRTF create unavoidable capital expense. The safety, security, and evidence-based therapeutic environment are things we simply can't compromise on.

The appropriation in this supplemental budget is important because it recognizes that these kinds of costs are a major barrier to expanding PRTF capacity. Without state partnership, nonprofit providers cannot assume this level of financial risk, and these facilities will not be built.

Sweetser is interested in working collaboratively with the State to develop a PRTF that keeps children closer to home, reduces reliance on emergency departments and out-of-state placements, and fits within Maine's broader continuum of care. We view this as a partnership that must balance clinical quality, safety, and long-term sustainability.

The nearly \$3.4 million appropriation in this supplemental budget represents a thoughtful, targeted investment in Maine's children and in Maine-based solutions.

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

John McAnuff, CFO