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*The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers*

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**Testimony in Support of LD 1779**  
**An Act to Develop a Continuum of Care for Youth Involved in the**  
**Justice System and to Develop Alternatives for Juveniles**  
**Incarcerated in Long Creek Youth Development Center**

Sponsored by Representative Lookner  
May 2, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I am Malory Shaughnessy, a Westbrook resident, and the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's safety net community-based mental health and substance use treatment providers. 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, I am here today to speak in support of LD 1779, "An Act to Develop a Continuum of Care for Youth Involved in the Justice System and to Develop Alternatives for Juveniles Incarcerated in Long Creek Youth Development Center." This bill does exactly what the title says by directing the DOC to gather important information on the youth currently incarcerated at Long Creek.

First, the proposal directs the DOC to establish a process to conduct an individualized needs assessment and complete a transition plan for every juvenile in the department's custody. Second, the DOC, working with the Children's Cabinet, is to develop recommendations for the reinvestment of corrections funds currently designated for youth incarceration into a continuum of community-based alternatives and report the recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

These two steps are very important and based upon decades of practical experience by providers. Before you can meet the needs of any client, you must conduct a needs assessment. Combining the DOC and the Children's Cabinet in this effort is brilliant – the Children's Cabinet, situated in the Office of Policy Innovation & Future should be focused on ALL Maine children. And the data and recommendations would be presented back to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety to study the selection of an entity to manage and distribute corrections funds currently designated for youth incarceration.

Finally, the DOC is directed to create and implement a workforce development plan for the Long Creek Youth Development Center staff in coordination with the Department of Labor, and to develop a plan to repurpose Long Creek Youth Development Center. This plan will be submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, including its findings, recommendations, and any suggested legislation.

This proposal tracks with the recommendations of the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment & Reinvestment Task Force of which I was a member, as was Commissioner Liberty, Office of Child and Family Services Director Landry, and many others. The final report of the Task Force, along with all the supporting data for the passage of LD 1779 is available at <https://www.mainejjtaskforce.org/>

The Alliance thanks Representative Lookner for this proposal to better meet the needs of our justice-involved youth, and create a continuum of care for Maine's young people. We urge members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee to support this initiative. Thank you.