

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and other distinguished members of the the HCIFS committee, my name is Stephen Hunn Jr. I am a registered nurse currently enrolled as a full-time student at the University of Maine to obtain a Masters of Nursing degree to become a Family Nurse Practitioner with a focus on mental health. I felt it was necessary that I allow you to hear my story and why I am in strong support of LD 1196. On June 21, 2009 a woman's lifeless body was found in a river by two fishermen. Three days prior was her birthday, and two days prior she was reported missing by her three children and husband. She was just 50 years old. On February 12, 2010, her life-long best friend was found by one of her three children dead on the floor of their basement. She was just 51. On May 5, 2014, a man was found with a single gun-shot wound to his head leaving behind 4 children and a wife. He was also 51. These three individuals stated in order; Kathy, Cindy, and Peter all suffered from mental health issues and all three took their lives. Kathy was my mother, Cindy was like family, and Peter was my uncle. As of 2019, the ninth leading cause of death in Maine is suicide. Access to mental healthcare can improve lives and communities and for many, it can dramatically reduce or eliminate the risk of suicide, legal issues, family conflict, employment issues, substance abuse, and further mental and physical health problems. When left untreated due to lack of access, mental health and substance use disorders are associated with premature mortality, productivity loss, high rates of disability, and increased risk for chronic disease. Not only will the lack of care affect the lives of people as I have mentioned, it can negatively affect businesses directly through increased absenteeism, quality of product, productivity and profits with an increase of cost to deal with the consequences of the lack of mental health

care. Report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; “Depression interferes with a person’s ability to complete physical job tasks about 20% of the time and reduces cognitive performance about 35% of the time. Only 57% of employees who report moderate depression and 40% of those who report severe depression receive treatment to control depression symptoms”, employees at high risk for depression had the highest health care costs during the three years after their initial health risk assessment. I bring the story of my family and these statistics to your attention to help you to fully understand the dire need for adequate access to mental healthcare. And although I have mentioned these things to you, I have yet to mention how mental health is affecting medical professionals in Maine. The overwhelming demand for mental health nurses and advanced practice nurses in this field has increased considerably and with the current state of the nation coupled with a pandemic that has lasted over a year...the need for mental health services will continue to increase. I fear that many healthcare professionals, such as myself, will also be seeking mental health care due to the toll COVID-19 has put on their emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. Please take this bill into thoughtful consideration as it has the potential to positively impact residents, communities, and businesses across the state of Maine.

Thank you,

Stephen Hunn Jr. RN, BSN
Nurse Practitioner Student
University of Maine, Orono