



LD 1304 Resolve, to Establish the Task Force to Study Barriers to Achieving Behavioral Health Integration and Parity

**Testimony in Support
April 11, 2023**

Senator Bailey, Representative and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, my name Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations speaking in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with more than 10,000 employees statewide.

Maine's health care system is working to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Behavioral health service providers are particularly challenged to meet the significant increase in demand for behavioral health services. Telehealth has significantly improved access but long waits for services do exist. Behavioral health workforce shortages impact the full scope of Maine's population – children to older adults.

Now is the time for a legislative task force to be formed to study barriers imposed by insurers and experienced by providers of behavioral health services. Every barrier we can remove from the system will increase our capacity to care for the people of Maine.

As you consider this legislation we do have one change that we strongly encourage the committee to add to the bill. Section 2 – Task Force Membership identifies specific provider types for membership. We recommend that the bill be amended to add an independent psychiatric hospital representative to the task force.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this important legislation.

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