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Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee On Health and Human Services. I am former State Representative Scott Strom of Pittsfield, and I am providing testimony in support of LD 118, "An Act To Address Maine's Shortage of Behavioral Health Services for Minors".

During my two terms in the Maine Legislature I also worked at Redington-Fairview Hospital in Skowhegan. My job at the hospital was as a Security Officer and the large majority of my time at work was spent in the Crisis Unit. Our Crisis Unit was located in the Emergency Department. During my time there we would have minors as patients in the Crisis Unit on a regular basis. Some were there for as little as a few hours and in some cases as long as a month. Crisis Units in the Emergency Departments are not set up for long term care and are used to hold the patients to either stabilize them so they can go home or until a bed can be found in a long term care unit. I can tell you from my first experience that teenagers and kids who are in there with severe behavior issues are not helped from spending weeks at a time in a locked down unit not set up with behavioral health staff. Their behavior does not improve while there. I have had to on many occasions help restrain these teens and kids to their beds with 4 point restrains. This was something I certainly hated doing but was needed to protect the hospital staff or the patients from themselves. I had on many occasions been hit, kicked, scratched and spit on. This issue has only gotten worse in recent years as the opioid crisis has destroyed so many families. I've seen so many kids who were crisis patients because all the adults in their lives were addicted to drugs. The State of Maine needs to do more to help these young people with real treatment and not be stuck in hospital emergency departments waiting for treatment for weeks at a time. This Legislation is not going to fix the problem but it is a great first step and will help us form a plan.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Scott Strom  
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