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

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**Testimony in Support of LD 632**

**An Act To Facilitate the Conversion of Children's Private Nonmedical  
Institutions to Qualified Residential Treatment Programs as  
Required by Federal Law**

Sponsored by Sen. Ned Claxton

3.18.2021

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Malory Shaughnessy, a resident of Westbrook, 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 632, An Act To Facilitate the Conversion of Children's Private Nonmedical Institutions (PNMIs) to Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) as Required by Federal Law.

For the past year, member agencies of the Alliance and I have been participating in a number of work groups and stakeholder meetings with DHHS and the Office of Child and Family Services regarding the adoption of the Family First Prevention Services Act in Maine. These have been productive and meaningful discussions. We have all learned a lot, and worked together to determine the way forward to enact these changes in Maine. These changes will be beneficial to the Maine children struggling with mental health needs, and their families.

However, during the current Burns and Associates (now a division of Health Management Associates) rate study process that is currently underway in preparation for assuring that Maine residential providers meet the Q RTP requirements, some grave concerns have been raised.

Currently in Maine, I believe there are only ten agencies left providing residential mental health services for youth, and of these 8 provide nearly 85% of all services. These agencies have participated in the rate study process, but the draft outcomes do not seem to reflect the actual costs of providing this higher level of care.

In Section 6, this bill states that the "department shall establish the requirements, timelines and estimated costs for children's private nonmedical institutions licensed on the effective date of this Act to convert to qualified residential treatment programs. *The department shall establish a method of providing financial resources to children's private nonmedical institutions to pay for the costs of conversion. The plan must include how those resources will be acquired, including, but not limited to, requests to the Legislature for appropriation, grant funding and reallocating resources within the department (emphasis added).*"

This is a key piece to this legislation, and addresses a great concern on the part of the current providers of children's residential mental health care.

It is essential that each organization receive the funding needed to meet the new requirements identified as a part of the Family's First QRTP legislation. We appreciate the department's efforts in this regard, but their resources are limited and may need to be augmented to fully convert these providers to the higher level of care and aftercare. It is also unclear from the draft rate report that the funding assumptions in the rate study would support the providers in meeting and sustaining the requirements moving forward.

We believe that this legislation is essential and should be amended to include that any plan by the department must establish a rate that will not only allow for this conversion, but sustain this new level of care.

As it stands now, several of the current providers are unsure if they can continue to provide these residential children's services moving forward. The loss of these services would be devastating to Maine children in need, and their families.

Please vote Ought to Pass on this legislation, and include an amendment to assure that the department add to their plan the need for enhanced rates to meet the enhanced services required.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions or get you any data that you might need.