



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive

Director

~ Officers ~

Eric Meyer, President

Spurwink

Dave McCluskey, 1st Vice-President

Community Care

Greg Bowers, 2nd Vice-President

Day One

Vickie Fisher, Secretary

Maine Behavioral Health Org.

Suzanne Farley, Treasurer

Wellspring, Inc.

Catherine Ryder, Past President

Tri-County Mental Health

~ Board Members ~

Adcare Educational Institute

ARC at Mid Coast Hospital

Alternative Services, NE, Inc.

Aroostook Mental Health Center

Assistance Plus

Catholic Charities Maine

Co-occurring Collaborative

Serving Maine

Christopher Aaron Center

Common Ties

Community Caring Collaborative

Community Concepts, Inc.

Community Health & Counseling

Crisis & Counseling Centers

COR Health

Crossroads Maine

Genoa Healthcare &

Telepsychiatry

Kennebec Behavioral Health

Maine Behavioral Health

Organization

Maine Behavioral Healthcare

MaineGeneral Behavioral Health

Milestone Recovery

NFI North, Inc.

Portland Recovery Community

Center

Penquis C.A.P., Inc.

Pathways of Maine

Rumford Group Homes

SequelCare of Maine

Sunrise Opportunities

Wings for Children & Families

Woodfords Family Services

Testimony in Support of LD 629

**Resolve, To Establish the Task Force To Study Improving Safety and
Provide Protection from Violence for Health Care Workers in Hospitals and
Mental Health Care Providers**

Sponsored by Rep. Riseman

3.23.2021

Good morning 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 629, Resolve, To Establish the Task Force To Study Improving Safety and Provide Protection from Violence for Health Care Workers in Hospitals and Mental Health Care Providers.

We support this bill and believe that violence towards healthcare practitioners and their staff is a serious safety issue that needs addressing. Too often staff are not given the resources they need to safely support someone seeking help. Health care staff and clinicians should have the supports they need to provide their services in a safe and secure manner. This is an issue that needs further review in order to determine the best process for addressing violence that may erupt in a hospital or health care setting.

There should be a process for assessing the person involved and determining if they are in an acute mental health crisis, or in the midst of a bad substance reaction, or if someone is creating a dangerous situation due to simple anger or disagreement with the provider or staff. Different responses should be made according to the assessment results.

It is important to recognize that disruption or violence perpetrated by individuals with mental health and substance use disorders represent complex behaviors related to clinical as well as social components that will not be addressed and are often exacerbated by being arrested. Incarceration also further limits access to healthy environments or supports and treatment options. After treatment and in recovery, individuals given a felony charge will often face a greater struggle with successful community reintegration. Such a felony and the stigma attached, often prevents appropriate employment, housing and social opportunities. These social determinants have been proven as necessary components to an individuals' future mental health and substance use recovery.

With the knowledge that it is best practice to divert people with substance use and mental health disorders away from the justice system, we support this bill. Thank you for hearing our testimony and I would be happy to get any data that you might need.