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March 23, 2021

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: 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

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

We submit this informational letter on behalf of the staff of Riverview Psychiatric Center and Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center ("the Hospitals"). We are not taking a position on the bill.

Violence is not an inherent part of mental illness. However, the Hospitals, as the State's mental health institutions, care for individuals with severe, persistent mental illness. The Hospitals are established to treat the subset of individuals with mental illness who may exhibit violence as part of their symptomatology. The Hospitals may be court-ordered to admit patients who cannot be safely managed in an inpatient setting. The Hospitals specialize in treatment of those patients who are committed to treatment because of dangerous behaviors, either to their self or others and the treatment of that dangerous behavior may have some association with misdirected aggressive or impulsive acts. The treatment brings mental health care workers, as part of their assigned duties, in direct contact with patients who may exhibit this degree of violent behavior.

The proposed task force could assist in understanding the nature of the Hospitals' challenging environment. The Hospitals can provide important information regarding the results of violence in the workplace, which impacts staff and other patients. The staff of both Hospitals have experienced assaults with resultant injuries related to violence in the workplace.

Should you have any questions, we would be glad to provide feedback at the work session.

Sincerely,

Sarah Taylor

Sarah Taylor, MBA, FACMPE
Superintendent

Daniel Potenza

Daniel Potenza, MD
Clinical Director