

Janet T. Mills
Governor

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Commissioner



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February 19, 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 475 – Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative

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

This letter is to provide information on LD 475, Resolve, To Create the Frequent Users System Engagement Collaborative.

This bill directs the Director of the Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) to serve as chair and convene a “Collaborative” consisting of the Commissioner (or designee) of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Commissioner (or designee) of the Department of Corrections (DOC), a representative of the Statewide Homeless Council, a representative of the Maine Sheriffs’ Association, a representative of emergency health services providers, and any other members with relevant expertise as determined by the MSHA Director.

The Collaborative is to develop a plan to provide stable housing and community services to two hundred (200) individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are the most frequent consumers of high-cost services such as psychiatric hospitals, emergency shelters, emergency rooms, police, jails, and prisons. The Collaborative is to report back to the HHS Committee by January 1, 2022 with a plan and recommendations.

Currently, the Department is involved in a number of groups that meet regularly to address the concerns outlined in this bill. These meetings include but are not limited to: the Statewide Homeless Council, which has expanded and includes several Department offices as well as DOC; collaborations between the Statewide Homeless Council and the Continuum of Care (COC), which includes a Statewide plan to end homelessness as part of the annual COC application; State Forensic Services’ ongoing work with the judicial system and community based services and the Department’s jail-based Intensive Case Managers (ICMs) ongoing and expanded work to increase support in the community to recently incarcerated individuals; ongoing meetings and program collaboration between the Department and MSHA to support recovery housing and supportive housing models; participation in “Homeless System Redesign” led by the Corporation for Supportive Housing; ongoing meetings between the Department, DOC, and Department of Public Safety on strategies to keep individuals with behavioral health

disorders out of jails and emergency departments; and other ongoing discussions and program development between the Department and relevant stakeholders.

We wanted the Committee to be aware of the above information as you consider this bill going forward. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica M. Pollard, PhD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'M'.

Jessica Monahan Pollard, PhD, Director
Office of Behavioral Health