



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of LD 674: Resolve, To Support Early Intervention and Treatment of Mental Health Disorders

Sponsored by Senator Breen

March 25, 2021

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Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and 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 state association for Maine's 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Alliance in support of LD 674.

This legislation would establish a funding mechanism to reimburse for the treatment of individuals at the onset of a psychotic disorder using the coordinated specialty care model. An abundance of data accumulated over the past two decades supports the value of early intervention following the first episode of psychosis.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) is a team-based, multi-element approach to treating First Episode of Psychosis that has been broadly implemented in Australia, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Canada. Component interventions include assertive case management, individual or group psychotherapy, supported employment and education services, family education and support, and low doses of select anti-psychotic agents.

Compared to typical care for first episode psychosis, coordinated specialty care has been shown to be more effective at reducing symptoms, improving quality of life and increasing involvement in work or school.

Take a moment to think of all of the testimony you have heard over the years seeking support for those struggling with severe psychiatric disorders – those Mainers that cycle through the system as adults due to severe mental illness – with diagnoses of Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, etc. Those that know all too well the insides of our county jails, the stark rooms in our Emergency Departments where they can languish for days on end, the streets on our communities where they too often find themselves.

Now think of a person living in your community with a psychiatric disorder – someone who received early care that met their needs, helped to stabilize them, allowed them to go on and achieve an education, pursue a career, contribute to their community, and live their best life.

Think about those two scenarios.

The members of the Alliance believe that this service should be available throughout the state of Maine for anyone that needs it. The young people struggling with first episode psychosis, and their families, deserves no less. **For all our young people, and their families, please support LD 674.**