

April Kerr  
Farmington

April 7th, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is April Kerr and I live in Farmington, Maine.

I am here today in support of LD 1009 Resolve, To Create a Health Care Ombudsman Position To Serve in Maine's County Jails with the proposed amendment.

As I have spent the past few years volunteering to be an advocate for consumers of mental health services with the Consumer Council System of Maine, I have seen more and more of how my fellow peers suffer. Many times it is due to not having the access to knowledgeable individuals who can assist them in seeking out the services that they need. I have learned much about the needs of people that are in the county jails and how many times these needs end up being not addressed for various reasons. In some cases, the results end up contributing to physical and mental health complications that are not only costly but in some cases the end results are death. This is not an acceptable way of correcting a wrong done by anyone. We need to come together and do something to create a much-needed change. I know that there are people in the jails who are working towards helping individuals, but their plates are full and many times the work they end up doing to help those who end up in the jails are not their area of expertise. I have heard the sheriff of one county testify in the past legislature that he felt that much of the work he and his officers were doing was mental health work, not work they were hired to do.

Let me leave you with this thought. If you had a toothache would you go to see a therapist or psychiatrist or if you had a problem seeing would you go to the local veterinarian? No, you say? What if that's all you have to work with? What if it was your child or parent who was crying in the night because they were so consumed with depression or thoughts of suicide that they just couldn't hold it in. Would you go to them? Would you find them a way to get help? I know I would do all I knew to do to find them the help they needed. Let's come together now and do just that for those who are suffering and don't know where to turn or have someone to go to so they can get help.

Please vote in favor of bringing together a group of people who can work towards effectively helping those who are in need.

Thank you, April L Kerr

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