



295 Water St.
Augusta, Maine 04330

**Testimony in Favor of LD 488:
A Resolve to Expand Recovery Community Organizations Throughout Maine**

April 12th, 2021

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Courtney Allen. I am a resident of Augusta and the Policy Director for the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project. ME-RAP is a grassroots network of people across Maine working to redefine and reimagine justice, access, connection, and recovery from substance use. One of our true north organizing principles at ME-RAP is that we listen to our community and then we act. Our community includes people in recovery, people who use drugs, family members, and all of our allies.

Today, I am here to testify in favor of LD 488: A Resolve to Expand Recovery Community Organizations Throughout Maine. You will hear from community members across the state about what a recovery community center is. You will also hear about the impact that they are having in the lives of people who have them in their communities and the need for more of them in communities without one.

I think the most important thing that I can add to this conversation today is that LD 488 is a direct ask from the recovery community - a community that has been on the front lines of the addiction crisis taking care of each other for a very long time. Recovery support services are not a new concept. It has been an integral part of our culture for decades. More recently, the concept has been formalized, researched^{1&2}, and supported through state and federal funding sources.

We want to thank the committee for your investment in our community during the 128th Legislative Session, resulting in seven centers opening across the state. We also want to thank Gov. Janet Mills, Gordon Smith, and the Department of Health and Human Services for their commitment to our community.

¹ Recovery community centers: Characteristics of new attendees and longitudinal investigation of the predictors and effects of participation, John Kelly, 2021, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33771284/>

² New kid on the block: An investigation of the physical, operational, personnel, and service characteristics of recovery community centers in the United States, John Kelly, 2020, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32087832/>



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They have worked tirelessly to involve our community in the decisions that impact us, to find more funding for centers, and by making recovery community centers a priority in the recently released [2021 Strategic Action Plan](#). We could not have better allies at the state level on this issue and we are grateful for all of you.

That being said, we still have seven counties that do not have access to a recovery community center. The county that I live in - Kennebec County - is one of them. I have long dreamed of a space to call our own but it became even more clear to me just how desperate we actually are for this space during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recovery support meetings of all sorts are one of the most important activities that we in recovery communities engage in. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our meeting spaces closed down, and our connection to each other with it.

Recovery communities are resilient so we responded by hosting outdoor, online, and house meetings, with masks and social distancing. But it has not been the same. Many of our community members have died this year to accidental overdose and others, some of our longest-standing members, have started drinking or using drugs again. I am positive that many of these instances could have been avoided if our traditional meeting spaces had been available.

As we have turned the corner on this pandemic, some in-person meeting spaces have come back but many are still closed down. We desperately need a place to come home to - we desperately need our own space, run for and by people in recovery.

No matter what happens with this particular resolve, I am proud of our community for their fierce advocacy on this issue. I am sure that this conversation will continue and we are here for it.

Thank you for your time today, and I hope that you will vote in favor of LD 488.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,
Courtney Allen
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