

April 12, 2021

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

My name is Jim Damicis and I am a resident of Scarborough Maine. I am submitting this written testimony in support of LD 488 A Resolve to Expand Recovery Community Centers Throughout Maine.

I am a parent of two adult children that my wife Joanne and I raised in Maine. My oldest, Patrick, is now 29 years old. Eight years ago, when he was 21, we learned that he had an addiction to opioids. He was in college in Maine after a normal childhood path: sports, hobbies, doing fine in school. However, what we thought might be recreational use of drugs was much more serious. He suffered from depression and anxiety which led to serious addiction to drugs and eventually heroin. His life had change drastically for the worse: leaving school, losing the ability to work, loss of friends, and increased depression. It took an infection from needle use for us to discover the reality of the situation. We knew he needed help and he did as well.

What we all soon discovered that getting help was easier said than done in Maine. There were very few options for treatment and after finding a day program through Mercy Hospital we were relieved. Unfortunately, the program ended due to lack of funding. Luckily, there were some resources in the Portland area which were helpful. This included the Portland Recovery Community Center, PRCC. They provided support groups, information, and an overall community of support for both Patrick and us. We learned a lot and met many great people with whom we could share stories and navigate paths to recovery. Eventually Patrick had a relapse and he sought more serious treatment through residential recovery. Again, the resources in Maine were lacking. Working with us, and even though we had insurance, there were no openings at any program in Maine. There were waiting lists eight months long. Patrick ended up going to residential recovery in Los Angeles California.

This story end well. Patrick remains in recovery in Los Angeles. After residential treatment then day programming and sober living residence he now lives on his own and has a successful job working in residential recovery. And, while he had to leave Maine because of lack of residential care options we benefited greatly from resources like PRCC. Frankly without their help we would not have made it.

While my son is doing fine and benefitted from our help and the help of PRCC, the addiction crisis continues in Maine and, in much of Maine, needed resources like PRCC are not available. LD488 is a critical step to addressing Maine's addiction crisis by making sure that every region of Maine is served by a recovery hub like PRCC. The result will be more services and much needed help for those in need of recovery and their families.

LD 448 is critical to the wellbeing of Maine. It will go well beyond helping persons seeking or in recovery and their families. It will help our communities, our workforce, and our business by giving all Maine residents an opportunity for hope and prosperity. I urge your support of LD 488.

Thank You

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