

# Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



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## **Testimony neither for nor against LD 488, to the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, April 12, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, distinguished members of the Committee.

My name is Peter Lehman and I live in Thomaston. I am a formerly incarcerated citizen and a person in long-term recovery.\* I am here speaking for the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. Our goal is to promote restorative practices to increase public safety and the health of our community.

Peer support is one of the most important elements in recovery. Others who have faced the same issues, who understand and share the struggles and frustrations of change, are critical. Peer support recovery centers provide an extraordinarily rich and fruitful resource of resource of connections and opportunities.

So, we are in favor the intent of this bill: to expand the resources of community peer supports around the state by providing much needed funding for peer supports in general and peer recovery support centers specifically.

We object, however, to the selection of counties to receive funding. The list includes counties with multiple peer recovery centers and excludes counties with none or small struggling and unfunded centers.

This is a result of the excessively narrow definition of “recovery community centers” to include only recovery from substance use disorder (SUD). That definition excludes other addictions, such as gambling, as well as other mental illnesses where peer supports have been proven to be equally valuable and efficacious.

Note that the training for Maine Recovery Coaches, developed by the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, does not narrowly focus on substance use only. And, similarly, the Maine Certified Intentional Peer Support training encompasses a broad variety of mental health issues including addictions and substance use.

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\* In the interest of honesty and disclosure, a personal background statement is available on request.

As a statewide organization, I assure you that the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition is not lobbying for any particular counties but, simply because we ARE statewide, can bring a broader perspective and familiarity to the issue.

In the list in the current draft of the bill, Kennebec County is listed as not having any peer support centers when, in fact, it has the LINC center in Augusta and the Waterville Peer Recovery Center in Waterville. To our knowledge, there is not a peer support recovery center in Androscoggin County. And we note that although there is a small and struggling peer community center in Knox County, it does not receive any state support and should be eligible to receive monies generated as a result of this legislation.

In short, we urge you to amend this important bill to consistently make financial support available to Peer Support Recovery Centers across Maine.

Thank you for your attention and support.