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*Testimony of Sen. Chloe Maxmin supporting*  
**LD 488, Resolve, To Expand Recovery Community Organizations throughout**  
**Maine**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

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

My name is Chloe Maxmin. I represent Senate District 13, which includes all of Lincoln County except for Dresden, plus Washington in Knox County and Windsor in Kennebec County—a total of twenty-seven towns. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of and present LD 488, Resolve, To Expand Recovery Community Organizations throughout Maine.

This bill aims to ensure that every county in Maine has a Recovery Community Organization. A recovery community organization (RCO) is an independent, non-profit organization led and governed by representatives of local communities of recovery. A recovery community center is operated by a recovery community organization and in simple terms, is the recovery community's home. More specifically, recovery community centers are a safe space for people in or seeking recovery from substance use, support multiple pathways to recovery, and provide three key things: peer-based recovery support services, public education, and policy advocacy. Recovery community centers act as connection centers for people in recovery to recovery coaches, self-help groups, yoga, education, employment, and offer multiple pathways to recovery. They are a unique model in a state that is suffering the daily tragedies of the addiction crisis and problematic substance use.

In 2018, The Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC)—who you will hear from today—was named the statewide recovery hub and received funding from the Maine Legislature through the Department of Health and Human Services to help develop and promote local recovery community centers throughout Maine. PRCC helped open seven new recovery community centers—Aroostook Recovery Center of Hope, Harbor Peer & Wellness Center, DownEast Recovery Support Center with two different locations, Lake Region Recovery Center, Roads to Recovery Community Center, and Bath Recovery Community Center—to open their doors. The existing Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN) joined the statewide network of centers and received funding in 2019.

During those early days, there was only so much funding available and hard decisions were made to focus all of the funding into rural areas of Maine—leaving out many urban areas and rural counties. The Department of Health and Human Services, Gordon Smith, and networks of recovery communities have worked to find other sources of funding or volunteer support to open more centers. In 2020 and 2021, an additional four recovery community centers have or are working towards opening—Coastal Recovery Community Center, Larry Labonte Recovery Center, Pir2Peer Recovery

Center, and the Rest Center—for a total of 13 recovery communities centers across the state, spread over 9 counties. Now we are trying to ensure that the remaining seven counties—Kennebec, York, Waldo, Hancock, Franklin, Somerset, and Piscataquis counties—have access to these services too.

The resolve asks for \$1,000,000 in grant funding to be directed to the Department of Health and Human Services. This specific number was chosen from conversations with a coalition working to open a recovery community center in York County—who you will also hear from today. They provided a copy of their draft budget that showed a year's worth of expenses for a recovery community center at around \$130,000. That number was used to extrapolate the expenses of seven centers. I have attached a copy of that budget to this testimony.

In further conversations with recovery communities and the Department of Health and Human Services, I have become aware that there are different levels of financial support that different types of recovery community centers need - anything from hundreds of thousands a year to smaller \$50 thousand dollar start-up grants, depending on the services they are providing. I have also heard concerns that requiring the Department to provide this funding in an expedited manner may cause an undue burden to the Department and unintended consequences to the recovery community. For these reasons, I would be open to an amendment of the bill to provide more time for the Department to send out their request for proposals. I am also not specifying exactly how much each county must receive in this resolution because it is best to leave those negotiations up to the communities who will receive this money and the Department of Health and Human Services. What's more—some counties are more ready to receive these funds than others, and we are ready to work with the Committee on the best way to ensure that Mainers have the support that they need.

I do recognize that this is a large ask in a year of such budget uncertainty, but this is the most important time to fund recovery community centers. In 2020, we lost 502 Mainers to accidental overdoses, a 25% increase over the year before. Attorney General Aaron Frey, Governor Mills, treatment providers, and grassroots advocates point to increased social isolation caused by the pandemic as the root cause of the increase. As we turn the corner on this dark time, the recovery community will need places to come together to heal and connect. Recovery community centers are those spaces.

It is also important to note that Gov. Mills recently released an updated Opioid Response Strategic Plan outlining five focus areas, nine priorities, and twenty strategies all focused on one goal: to reduce the negative health and economic impacts of substance use disorder and opioid use disorder on individuals, families, and communities in Maine. Priority I is to build and support recovery-ready communities through a strategy of increasing community-based recovery supports by providing funding for additional community-based recovery centers. This resolve is aligned with that plan and would help her meet that goal much sooner than expected.

This resolve is a direct request of the recovery community. I am merely the conduit. I will let their stories and expertise guide the conversation today. In particular, I point you to Courtney Allen at the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project as well as Leslie Clark at the Portland Recovery Community Center. You will hear from many Mainers about the impact these centers have had in their lives. But there are also seven counties, and therefore recovery communities and thousands of people, that do not have access to this vital recovery support service. Today, you will also hear from many of these Mainers.

I am happy to answer any questions, and thank you for your time—

Sincerely,

Chloe Maxmin