



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Jennifer Poirier presenting

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 members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Jennifer Poirier, and I represent House District 107, which is comprised of Skowhegan and part of Madison. I am pleased to be before you today as a cosponsor of **LD 488, Resolve, To Expand Recovery Community Organizations throughout Maine.**

I know people who have lost battles. I know people who struggle. And I know people who were able to find help and reach recovery. Everyone deserves that chance!

We have all lost a loved one, a classmate, an acquaintance, a community member to overdose. My family lost Cole five years ago. He was our neighbor's son, but like a son of our own. He grew up with our boys and he would walk through the trail in the woods in two feet of snow just to come over. I remember his smile. At 19, Cole experimented with heroin pills. Three days after Christmas, his second one was laced with a fatal dose of fentanyl. Cole was gone.

I admit, I was hesitant to sign onto this bill when Senator Maxmin first contacted me. I no knowledge of what a community recovery organization was or how it worked. But I did know that my community, like many others throughout our state, need programs to help people battling addiction. I chose to do the research. It did not take a lot of searching to see the positive impact that the programs have had on the areas they serve. I gladly decided to cosponsor, but still wanted to know more. I joined groups online and participated in Zoom meetings with people who utilized community recovery centers in Maine. The realities hit me in the face and I knew that I was asked to support LD 488 for a reason. I have been advocating for more recovery organization expansion since. We need them throughout our state!



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Shortly after being elected to serve in the Legislature, I met with Somerset County Sheriff Dale Lancaster to discuss various topics and concerns. I was shocked to hear that the majority of inmates are being treated for opioid dependency and other substance use disorders. It has become standard procedure to bring an inmate to a physician upon release, to start them on treatment outside of the corrections department. Having resources available to people **before** they end up in the criminal justice system is key. Our corrections departments were not built to be drug treatment centers, and it is a huge financial burden on taxpayers.

There are programs that offer addictive disorder assistance, but a step-by-step program does not work for everyone. A community, peer-based organization offers various alternatives. I implore you all to listen to the success stories! Please allow the other counties in Maine to share in this success. Recovery Centers having a presence in our communities **WILL** save lives. Our people need help and it is our job to help them. Join me and many others and advocate for recovery. Everybody deserves that chance!

I urge you to vote ought to pass and I thank you for your consideration.

I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have for me.