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Testimony in Favor of LD 488

A Resolve to Expand Recovery Community Centers Throughout Maine

April 11, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Rep Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Dr. Ronald Springel, a resident of Scarborough. I am a person with lived experience in recovery from Substance Use Disorder and, as part of my employment with the Maine Association of Recovery Residences, have had the opportunity to visit most of the community recovery centers in Maine.

Two years ago, only the Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC) and the Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN) existed in our state. They were grassroots, pulled-up-by-bootstraps operations. They relied largely upon volunteers and programming was limited due to funding shortfalls.

With governor Mills' Executive Order (#2) and with the leadership of Gordon Smith several additional centers were opened. What followed was the development of a corps of dedicated volunteers who helped the few paid staff to offer programs of support and safe meeting spaces. Although hampered by the pandemic, these centers provided the beginning of a community structure of recovery.

The work of MARR has been enhanced by the community recovery centers as the same corps of volunteers helped to establish *de novo*, certified recovery residences for the first time in these counties. In Washington County (Machias), Safe Harbor for women opened in 2020 and in Aroostook County (Caribou), the Caribou Men's Recovery House opened. Certified recovery residences follow community recovery centers. They are **force multipliers**.

In Maine, there are currently 7 counties without a certified recovery residence. Franklin, Hancock, Piscataquis, and Waldo counties have neither a certified recovery residence nor a community recovery center.

LD 488 would doubly serve the residents of those counties by not only providing community support services but also by providing the fertile ground for a certified recovery residence to develop. *Recovery residences follow community recovery centers.*

It is a shocking truth that we are still losing about as many lives per month from fatal drug overdoses as we are from the COVID-19 pandemic. It seems completely incredible that the

relatively small commitment of resources to fund a few recovery centers cannot be allocated when we consider the millions and millions being spent to battle the pandemic.

I can personally attest to the benefit I received from the PRCC and BARN in the early part of my own recovery. I have seen hundreds of others benefit both directly and indirectly. 502 dead from overdose in 2020. That alone should be enough to convince anyone we must do more.

Please vote *Ought to Pass* on LD488.

I am submitting this as written testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at rspringelmd@gmail.com

Most sincerely and respectfully,

Ronald D Springel, MD
Scarborough, ME