

Testimony in support LD 488: Resolve, To Expand Recovery Community Organizations throughout Maine

April 12, 2021

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

I will not repeat the litany of statistics here to convince you that Maine is in crisis. You know that it is, as more Mainers die daily from drug overdoses than ever before, with thousands more continuing problematic drug use without access to the support and treatment that they need and want.

We have a consensus that problematic substance use and substance use disorder are public health problems, that require public health solutions. Recovery centers are a critical part of this public health approach.

In her 2019 address, Maine Supreme Court Chief Justice Leigh Saufley emphasized to legislators must fund community supports to respond to the profound impact of substance use disorder in Maine communities. She told legislators *All of the funding necessary to respond to the addiction and mental health needs of the public should be focused on the wide range of necessary community-based services*” (italics in the original).¹

At the Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College, we are involved in researching the impact of drug policies in local communities, and the experiences of women who use drugs and women in recovery. We have heard over and over again the critical role of finding community support as people seek and maintain recovery. And we have heard the tragic stories of lost years and damaged relationships when people could not find the support they needed, resulting in escalated problematic substance use, incarceration and even overdose death.

What kinds of spending will help us create thriving communities? Decades of research and the lived experiences of thousands of Mainers are clear: we need money for communities, for health care, for treatment. We need recovery community centers in every county, ideally in every town, to ensure that people seeking recovery can easily access the supports they require.

This year, LD 488 asks for a million dollars to fund recovery centers in every county in Maine. Because Maine does not have treatment for everyone who needs it, we do not even have recovery centers available for people seeking connection, resources and support. Recovery centers do are desperately needed community supports for people with SUD.

Maine communities cannot afford to keep funding failed policies. It is time to put our money where our mouth is: to fund recovery supports, public health infrastructure and invest in communities.

¹ MAINE JUDICIAL BRANCH, “THE STATE OF THE JUDICIARY: A Report to the Joint Convention of the First Regular Session of the 129th Maine Legislature,” Presented by Chief Justice Leigh I. Saufley, February 26, 2019.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

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Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College

The Maine Drug Policy Lab at Colby College brings together policymakers, scholars and students, providing evidence-based analysis for addressing critical drug policy issues in our state and beyond, and conducts research on problematic drug use and access to treatment in Maine.