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**THE MAINE SENATE**

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Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony introducing  
LD 197, Resolve, To Ensure That Community Mental Health Service Providers Can  
Access Pandemic Stimulus Funds  
Senator Cathy Breen  
April 15, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Cathy Breen. I represent Maine Senate District 25, which includes the communities of Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, Yarmouth, and about half of the City of Westbrook. I am here to introduce **LD 197, Resolve, To Ensure That Community Mental Health Service Providers Can Access Pandemic Stimulus Funds.**

This resolve is a result of the public briefings that the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs (AFA) hosted last summer and fall in anticipation of a special legislative session (which never happened). We had adjourned early in March 2020, due to the pandemic. AFA then invited various types and sectors of businesses to describe how the pandemic was affecting them. During those briefings, AFA got a direct request from mental health and substance use providers whose clients, services, staff and budgets had been hit hard by COVID19.

This resolve requires the Department of Health and Human Services to designate \$15 million of Maine's share of federal COVID-19 stimulus funding for mental health and substance use disorder service providers. This will allow them to apply for revenues lost and extra expenses such as improved technology, reduced program census, hazard and retention pay, personal protective equipment and more.

This pandemic has deeply affected all of us. We have done a decent job coping as individuals and as a state. We know that one of the "hidden" epidemics is the toll it is taking on people's mental health. Our network of mental health providers have both taken economic and census hits in many ways and they are in more demand than ever - more people who need service and increased acuity for many who were already receiving services.

The relief and assistance from federal stimulus bills thus far for mental health providers has been minimal and sporadic. To make matters even more complicated, some have been able to access programs and others have not due to size, strict qualifications that left out mental health providers and other factors. In other cases, the amount available for assistance did not begin to meet the need.

Designating this money for mental health and substance use disorder services will help correct this oversight. Maine's portion of Mental Health Block Grant funding and Substance Abuse Block Grant funding from the American Rescue Plan is a combined \$12 million, which will go a long way toward helping these populations. But given the underfunding of these programs for years, resulting in long waiting lists for service, I think we should reserve an additional amount of money to make a one-time investment in these services.

I hope you agree and will support LD 197. Thank you and I'd be happy to take any questions.