



Committee on Health and Human Services
c/o Kerri Withee, Legislative Information Office
Cross Building, Room 209
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD582:

Dear Senator Claxton , Representative Meyer, and other members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Jerry Marx. I am a resident of Portland and Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. There are over 5,000 licensed social workers providing health services to individuals and families throughout the state. We are the largest provider of mental health services in the nation.

NASW Maine supports LD582, An Act To Support the Fidelity and Sustainability of Assertive Community Treatment, presented by Representative Madigan of Waterville. It is my understanding that this bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to increase the MaineCare reimbursement rates for individualized intensive, integrated mental health services, known as "assertive community treatment" or "ACT," by 25% immediately to allow providers to continue to offer the service.

A 2019 NASW Maine survey of 5,000 social workers revealed that low pay and low reimbursement rates for services are social workers' two highest concerns. These conditions contribute to social work shortages and other challenges in meeting client needs, particularly in more rural parts of Maine. Notably, low reimbursement contributes directly to independent clinicians choosing not to accept MaineCare clients, decreasing access to much needed mental health services for some of Maine's most needy residents. Increasing reimbursement for assertive community treatment services by licensed clinical social workers and allied health professionals is a critical step in ensuring that effective services are available and accessible.

This bill will help to insure access to community mental health services at a time when the state and nation continues to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. I urge you all to vote yes on LD582.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Marx, PhD
Executive Director
NASW Maine Chapter
jmarx.naswme@socialworkers.org

References:

NASW, Maine Chapter. (2021) *About*.

<https://naswme.socialworkers.org/About#:~:text=The%20NASW%2DMaine%20Chapter%2C%20with,work%20organization%20in%20the%20state.&text=Professional%20social%20workers%20are%20the,of%20mental%20health%20service%20providers>.