



**Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine**  
*The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers*

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Woodfords Family Services

**Testimony in Support of LD 197**  
**Resolve, To Ensure That Community Mental Health Service Providers**  
**Can Access Pandemic Stimulus Funds**

Sponsored by Senator Cathy Breen on April 15, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Representative Meyers, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Malory Shaughnessy, a resident of Westbrook, and the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Alliance **in support of** LD 197.

This resolve requires the Department of Health and Human Services to designate \$15,000,000 of federal COVID-19 stimulus funding allocated to the State pursuant to a federal law enacted after December 15, 2020 for community mental health service providers.

In [July of 2020, the Alliance wrote to the Governor](#) to request she set aside a fund such as this to help shore up the safety net of behavioral health providers in Maine. As services were disrupted, as agencies rapidly shifted gears to provide services virtually, to outfit staff to work remotely, to do extra cleaning and outfitting of staff in safe personal protective equipment, and to remain open to respond to the community needs -- we knew that there would be costs that agencies just could not sustain. **We were right and we were denied.**

Thankfully, the federal government put out a couple of rounds of provider relief funds which many agencies in Maine were able to utilize to keep their doors open. These grants were offered with a reasonable amount of paperwork, and provided needed funding. However, when the Mills administration offered their rounds of grants to Maine businesses and nonprofits in the fall, most Alliance members did not apply. These funds had a high hurdle of paperwork, and provided few dollars to offset the losses that had been sustained.

As we continue to move through the pandemic and its aftershocks, **there are two things we clearly know:**

**One** - We know that there are several billion in federal funds coming into Maine over the next two years to address responses to Covid-19.

**Two** – We know that one of the biggest impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be to increase the need for mental health and substance use services for Mainers, both adults and children.

It only makes sense to set aside some of the federal funding to be available in a Safety Net Support Fund that could be accessed by providers as needed to offset costs of testing, personal protection equipment, extra cleaning and overtime, etc. These are essential services that MUST be sustained, must be addressed to meet the growing need we will be seeing over the next two years. Experts have predicted a "tsunami of psychiatric illness" in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>. For such a large-scale event like COVID-19 pandemic, the impact on mental health can be long lasting<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Tandon R. Covid-19 and mental health: preserving humanity, maintaining sanity, and promoting health. *Asian J. Psychiatr.* 2020;50 [PMCID free article]

<sup>2</sup> Galea S., Merchant R.M., Laurie N. The mental health consequences of Covid-19 and physical distancing: the need for prevention and early intervention. *JAMA Intern. Med.* 2020;180(6):817–818. [PubMed]

We call on this committee to instruct the administration to set aside a “safety net” fund to assure that Mainers mental health needs can be met. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 197.

Thank you. I would be happy to bring additional data to the work session or answer any questions today.

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*With 35 members, the **Alliance** is the state association for Maine’s community based mental health and substance use treatment providers. The **Alliance** advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system. All Mainers should have full access to the continuum of recovery-oriented systems of care for mental illness and substance use disorder – from prevention through treatment and into peer recovery support.*