



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in support of LD 1301

An Act To Support Transitional Housing for Persons Experiencing Abuse, Dangerous Living Conditions, Economic Insecurity due to Divorce or Separation

Sponsored by Representative Collings on April 20, 2021

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Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am Malory Shaughnessy, a resident of Westbrook, and Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. **On behalf of the Alliance, I am here to speak in support of LD 1301.**

The Alliance represents Maine's safety net community-based mental health and substance use treatment agencies. We advocate for sound policies and evidence-based practices that enhance the quality and effectiveness of Maine's behavioral health care system.

A healthy connection between the health and well-being of the body and mind is everything we do at the Alliance. While disentangling the nature of the relationship between homelessness and psychiatric disorders is difficult, a clear link between the two does exist. Studies looking at mental illness and persons who are homeless have generally found a high prevalence of mental disorders.

Homelessness itself, in turn, has been associated with poorer mental health outcomes and may exacerbate certain types of disorders. For example, findings indicate that homelessness is related to higher levels of psychiatric distress and lower levels of recovery from serious mental illness.

If people could more easily access supportive housing and necessary community resources homelessness would be reduced.

LD 1301 directs the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate and arrange for transitional housing and services. This support would help residents who are in the process of creating better lives for themselves and address temporary housing for people who are:

- Experiencing abuse
- Living in dangerous conditions
- Experiencing economic insecurity due to divorce or separation
- Working through homelessness
- Recovering from substance use disorder

Life changes like the ones listed generally occur along with profound emotional turmoil. Just as a physical ailment may require hospitalization and a time to heal, profound emotional stressors may require the same. Supporting transitional housing could create better results for Maine. Our members work hard to keep people secure in the social safety net and as such believe supporting LD 1301 would make a positive impact.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1301. Thank you for your time.