

Testimony of Karen Evans

In Support of LD 1147

“Resolve, to Enhance Access to Medication Management for Individuals with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness”

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Karen Evans of Portland, and I strongly support this legislation.

The community needs of the mental health population have been best seen in the need for medication management, psychiatric services, mental health counseling, and inpatient hospital beds.

I know for myself, if I don't have my meds, I will be in the hospital. We tend to condemn the mentally ill in regards to acts of violence, yet we don't provide them with the med management that allows them to stabilize their lives. Others depend on counseling as part of their toolbox and without it, they too would struggle with maintaining mental health. When I am not doing well, at times a stay in the hospital is the only thing that allows me solace.

The med management needs have tried to be met by primary care physicians who don't like being put in the position of ordering psychotropic drugs. And to add to the problem, psychiatrists are retiring at a rate faster than they are coming into the field.

Kennebec Behavioral Health in their testimony last week that they have a waitlist of 700 and Maine Behavioral Health Care has an average wait of 6-8 months to see a psychiatrist. As a person with lived experience, it makes me anxious to hear numbers and timeframes that could contribute to difficulty accessing services for my mental health needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill.