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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

**Testimony of Speaker Ryan Fecteau
In Support of L.D. 1470
“Resolve, Regarding Reimbursement for Providing Inpatient Care
to Individuals with Acute Mental Health Care Needs”
Tuesday, April 27, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Ryan Fecteau and I represent part of my hometown of Biddeford. I also have the distinct honor of serving as the Speaker of the Maine House. I’m submitting this testimony as a proud cosponsor of L.D. 1470, *Resolve, Regarding Reimbursement for Providing Inpatient Care to Individuals with Acute Mental Health Care Needs*, sponsored by Representative Meyer.

As members of this committee know well, the need for acute mental health care in our state has reached crisis levels. The COVID-19 pandemic made a dire situation even worse, bringing many of our neighbors and support networks to a breaking point. Our hospitals, such as Southern Maine Health Care (SMHC) in my district, have seen dramatic increases in the number of patients who end up in the emergency room and, after being assessed, are found to need inpatient mental health care services. Because adequate treatment capacity does not exist, patients are spending not mere hours but *days* in the emergency room waiting for the services they need. This reality is both costly and counterproductive.

In my region, MaineHealth has made particular strides towards meeting some of this growing need in our state. For those efforts to succeed, it is crucially important that MaineCare provide appropriate reimbursement rates for these mental health services. MaineHealth has nearly doubled capacity with the new Sanford beds, but they desperately need a reasonable reimbursement rate to cover the costs of staffing those beds. Without the Legislature’s action, MaineCare reimbursements will cover less than two-thirds of the cost of caring for MaineCare patients, who currently make up 45% of all patients at the Sanford facility.

This is obviously unsustainable. Our communities cannot afford to wait for this increased treatment capacity. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation, and I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on L.D. 1470.