



Maine Medical Association

Karen Saylor, MD, President | Jeffrey S. Barkin, MD, President-Elect | Erik N. Steele, DO, FAAFP, Chair, Board of Directors
Andrew B. MacLean, JD, CEO | Dan Morin, Director of Communications & Government Affairs

TO: The Honorable Ned Claxton, Chair
The Honorable Michelle Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services

FM: Dan Morin, Director of Communications and Government Affairs

DATE: April 27, 2021

RE: **Support**

[LD 1470, Resolve, Regarding Reimbursement for Providing Inpatient Care to Individuals with Acute Mental Health Care Needs](#)

The [Maine Medical Association](#) is the state's largest professional physician organization representing more than 4300 physicians, residents, and [medical students](#) across all clinical specialties, organizations, and practice settings.

The Resolve before you requires the Department of Health and Human Services to amend its rules to provide reimbursement for patients discharged from Southern Maine Health Care's psychiatric inpatient unit, apply for federal funding, and submit a report to the Legislature by the end of the year on its efforts to address this issue.

It is well known to returning members of this Committee and your incumbent legislative colleagues over the past few years that many emergency department stays for behavioral health last for hours; some even stay there for days or weeks because no appropriate mental health care is available. It is not only rampant throughout the State, [but around the country](#).

Too many constituents with mental health issues are not getting the care they need, at the right place, at the right times. Why? There are too few outpatient resources and inpatient treatment options. The Maine Medical Association has heard these concerns specifically from our member emergency room physicians and member psychiatrists who also lead the [Maine Chapter of the](#)

[American College of Emergency Physicians](#) and the [Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians](#) respectively.

Southern Maine Healthcare saw the need for additional psychiatric inpatient capacity to support York and Cumberland Counties by repurposing beds at the former Goodall Hospital in Sanford and combining resources with Maine Behavioral Healthcare to increase psychiatric beds for the service area.

Given the consequences of years of insufficient resources, inaction, rate studies, delays, and a just [recently concluded rate review analysis](#), Southern Maine Healthcare decided to step up and move forward with a substantial financial and personnel investment to provide better care coordination for patients in need. We support their efforts and hope the Legislature and Department will agree and take action to pass this modest investment for such a pressing crisis. Thank you for your review of our comments. Please vote Ought to Pass.