



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 1470

Resolve, To Direct the Department of Health and Human Services To Support the Needs of Individuals with Acute Mental Health Needs

Sponsored by Representative Meyer on April 27, 2021

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Good afternoon Senator Claxton, Representative Meyers, and esteemed 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.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here to urge you to consider the needs for expanded psychiatric inpatient bed capacity for acute mental health treatment and to support this **bill LD 1470 - Resolve, To Direct the Department of Health and Human Services To Support the Needs of Individuals with Acute Mental Health Needs.**

I am also here as the mother of an adult son who was stuck in the Emergency Department last year for 55 hours with an acute psychiatric crisis while they scrambled to try to find an appropriate psychiatric inpatient bed for him. We were told it was taking upwards of 4 days for placements, and the placement might end up being anywhere in the New England region. We were lucky and a bed became available near us with only a little over a 2 day wait.

Now it may take up to a week to get a bed.

Maine's acute care hospitals have experienced a significant growth in patients with psychiatric illness who get assessed in Emergency Departments and are determined to need inpatient care. Between 2017 and 2019, Maine Health hospitals saw an average of 2,456 psychiatric patients per year in their Emergency Departments. The average length of stay in the ED for these patients was 31 hours before finding a treatment bed. The average length of stay of patients with other medical needs was 5 hours to find a treatment bed. This is not parity of care.

This discharge rate for Southern Maine Health Care's psychiatric inpatient unit was derived with planning between the state and providers to address these gaps in service and create 42 psychiatric beds and a psychiatric emergency room on the Goodall Campus in Sanford. This solution is in place now, and the continued availability of these additional inpatient beds are crucial to providing quality mental health services in Maine.

Please support this resolve.

*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.*