



Senator Ned Claxton, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1090

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing  
Committee on Health & Human Services:

The Treatment Advocacy Center, is a nationwide nonprofit dedicated to eliminating barriers to the treatment of severe mental illness (SMI). We support LD 1090 because it would eliminate a significant barrier to effective treatment.

Outpatient treatment programs are a necessary part of the recovery process for people with SMI and no state mental healthcare system will ever have a continuum of care without court-ordered and court monitored outpatient treatment. Maine's progressive treatment program (PTP) is a law designed to provide community-based mental health treatment under civil court commitment, as a means of: 1) motivating a person with severe mental illness who struggles with treatment adherence to engage fully with their treatment plan; and 2) focusing the attention of treatment providers on the need to work diligently to keep the person engaged in effective treatment. PTP is designed to allow outpatient treatment options for people living with SMI before their psychiatric condition deteriorates to the point of involuntary inpatient commitment, or too often, incarceration. Maine's PTP law is a well-written statute that is currently underutilized.

The Treatment Advocacy Center works with clinicians, court systems, families, and peers in dozens of states to help implement programs similar to PTP and no other state, to our knowledge, has either of the two barriers that are restricting the use of PTP in Maine—an unreasonably high filing fee and the burden of that fee often resting with ACT teams. Any barrier to filing a PTP petition will prevent outpatient treatment for patients who are capable of receiving psychiatric services in the community. That denial of outpatient services leads to involuntary inpatient commitment, incarceration, and even death. Other states do not face those two barriers that hospitals, clinicians, and families currently experience in Maine despite the fact that other states also require legal representation and court proceedings. Filing fees are not uncommon, but they tend to be much lower than Maine's and are often waived.

LD 1090 will address a significant obstruction to effecting mental healthcare in Maine. It is a good bill and we ask the Health and Human Services Committee to pass it today.

Thank you.

Michael Gray  
Legislative & Policy Counsel  
Treatment Advocacy Center