



May 3, 2021

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Good Morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify in favor of LD 1586: **An Act To Strengthen Statewide Mental Health Peer Support, Crisis Intervention Mobile Response and Crisis Stabilization Unit Services and To Allow E-9-1-1 To Dispatch Using the Crisis System.**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

On behalf of my fellow peers, I was part of the LD 1602 Workgroup that this bill is based on. The CCSM believes that this groups work is a good start in addressing some of the inadequacies of our current mental health system.

While all the subsections of this bill are important, we want to highlight the importance of peer support services in the continuum of crisis care.

We have seen that since the beginning of this pandemic, the Intentional Warmline has been receiving many more calls from current callers and new callers needing additional supports. Call volume has increased by over 40%. Funding for additional staff will greatly help to alleviate the rising number of calls received daily. Temporary FEMA supplemental funding for the warmline increase will end once the pandemic has been brought under control. Therefore, the funding to be allocated in this bill will help to offset this loss to ensure that the warmline can still meet the needs of those who use this valuable service. This level of support has shown to keep many people from needing higher levels of care.



We know that clinical and peer services can complement each other in providing a more wholistic experience for individuals in distress. In the last crisis services RFP that DHHS released, it included peer support specialists on the mobile crisis teams. In the implementation process peer support services were dropped. We see this bill as a great place to address this important piece of the crisis system. We believe that adding peer support specialists to crisis stabilization units as well would be another great place for peers to receive support from those with lived experience and recovery.

Workforce development in the field of peer support is also needed to increase the capacity of the peer support specialist's profession in Maine.

Now is the time to move the crisis system in Maine back to a more robust service. More people need support that have not traditionally needed mental health services in the past. We need to offer low barrier crisis services so that people do not end up in emergency rooms or worse. When we give people support when most needed this is often meeting people's needs. When we do not meet people's needs, their distress doesn't go away!

Finally, we believe that all invested parties should and can work together to make our mental health system the best it can be for the wellbeing of all Maine citizens.

Therefore, we ask that you vote ought to pass on LD 1586.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Simonne Maline

Executive Director