

UPDATED TESTIMONY



May 21st, 2021

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Courtney Allen. I am the Policy Director of the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project. I am here today to testify in favor of [LD 1722](#): An Act To Ensure Access to All Paths to Recovery for Persons Affected by Opioids Using Money Obtained through Litigation against Opioid Manufacturers on behalf of our network. Our community includes people in recovery, people who use drugs, family members, and our allies across the state.

This bill seeks to ensure that the recovery community has a seat at the table as decisions are made on how to spend opioid litigation funds in our state. This could not be more important to our community, as we are the people who have endured the most harm at the hands of opioid prescribers and therefore should be included in the conversations about how to best spend that money. Time and time again our community has been left out of the policy decisions that directly impact us. We ask your committee to ensure that does not happen again.

We do hope that the Attorney General will consider non-traditional voices from our communities and seek to include a diverse representation of the recovery community as appointments are made. Non-traditional voices may be people who have never served on a commission or who identifies as a person who uses drugs, among others. We believe that the collective responsibility of recovery advocacy and service to our movement should be delegated throughout it and not on the shoulders of a few advocates.

We also believe that the opioid settlement funds should be overseen by a separate entity than the Substance Use Disorder Commission. The recovery community is a diverse community and therefore we should always try to include as many of their voices as possible. This Commission also seeks to expand representation of voices that are not represented on the SUD Commission. These additional voices include:

- The Attorney General, who has been directly involved in securing these funds, or his designee;
- The Commissioner of Health and Human Services or a designee;
- The Director of Opioid Response or designee;

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- A member who represents families impacted by the opioid and substance use crisis;
- A member representing reentry supports for currently and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families;
- A member representing pretrial services;
- Two members representing municipalities impacted by the opioid and substance use crisis;

We met with a wider coalition of advocacy organizations yesterday - including Health Equity Alliance, Maine Prisoner Reentry Network, Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition, Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, and others to review the language of the bill. We are collectively proposing a friendly amendment to the language for the review of your committee. We recommend that a few additional appointees be added, to include:

- A member representing harm reduction services;
- Three members at large representing geographically diverse areas not currently represented on the commission

These recommendations are to ensure that all stakeholders are represented, including geographical distribution. We are also recommending that language be added to the bill to ensure a collaborative effort between the The Maine Opioid and Substance Use Abatement Advisory Commission and the Substance Use Disorder Commission. Our proposed language changes will be attached to my written testimony.

We urge your committee to refrain from holding this bill over to the next session and to act now. Opioid settlement money is already available in the state and other monies will be coming soon. We worry that if you wait till the second session that the money could be spent without the input of this diverse stakeholder group. We ask that you protect this money now by voting ought to pass as amended.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Courtney Allen

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Friendly Amendment

2. Membership. The commission consists of 19 members who represent as follows:

- The Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee, who serves as chair of the commission;
- The Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee;
- The director of the opioid response unit within the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future or the director's designee;
- One member of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- One member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- One member representing families impacted by the opioid crisis, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member from the medical community with expertise in substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health treatment, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member representing the substance use prevention community, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member representing the recovery advocacy ~~substance use recovery~~ community, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member with lived experience with substance use disorder, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member representing law enforcement, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member representing reentry supports for currently and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member representing pretrial services, appointed by the Attorney General;
- One member representing harm reduction services, appointed by the Attorney General.
- Three at-large members representing geographically diverse areas not currently represented on the commission; appointed by the Attorney General
- Two members representing municipalities in the State impacted by the opioid and substance use crisis, appointed by the Attorney General.

4. Meetings. The commission shall meet at least quarterly twice within each calendar year and shall designate a member of the commission to meet twice annually with the State designated Substance Use Disorder Commission. Six members of the commission constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Each member of the commission has one vote, with all actions being taken by an affirmative vote of the majority of members present.

Courtney Allen
UPDATED*Maine Recovery Advocacy Project

This is an UPDATED version of my testimony. Please reference this version.