



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

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Testimony in Support 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

Sponsored by Representative Charlotte Warren on May 21, 2021

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, 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 speak in support 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. We thank Representative Warren and Senate President Jackson for bringing this legislation to you today. We also understand that there is an amendment to the initial legislation and are even more in support with that version.

This bill would direct all funds awarded to the state of Maine through opioid litigation and settlements into an Opioid and Substance Use Abatement Fund to be administered by the Attorney General for the purpose of remediating and addressing the substance use crisis in Maine through prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.

First off, I would point out that Maine has a precedent for doing this type of dedicated fund, and a track record to show the positive impact it has had on Maine. When Maine's share of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement was set to arrive, the 119th Legislature acknowledged the special purpose of the money and created the Fund for a Healthy Maine, with its evidence-based public health categories on which the tobacco dollars would be spent. There are countless data points to show the good this has done and the positive impact this has had to improve public health in Maine.

Much like the Fund for a Healthy Maine was established to do good in Maine, and was built on the settlement funds for misdeeds and misleading advertisements and statements by some tobacco companies, we now have the opportunity to do good in Maine built on the settlement funds for misdeeds and misleading advertising and statements by some pharmaceutical companies.

And I am sure that similarly to the Fund for a Healthy Maine, there will need to be advocates to protect the fund and make sure it remains true to the intent of its creation - to assure that it is not siphoned off to a myriad of other purposes in the general fund.

To that end, the bill also establishes the Maine Opioid and Substance Use Abatement Advisory Commission to review opioid and substance use related information and determine how Opioid and Substance Use Abatement Fund funds are to be spent to carry out the purposes of the fund. The amendment has expanded the membership of this commission to include more stakeholders and to assure that all parts of Maine are represented. It also connects it to the already established Substance Use Disorder Commission.

Please vote Ought to Pass on this legislation and do more good in Maine.

*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.*