

Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business,
attn: Committee Clerk
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 632, The Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business,

I am a licensed clinical social worker and alcohol and drug counselor in private practice in Southern Maine, and currently the only clinician offering co-occurring treatment in Spanish for Latinx Mainers. I support LD 632, legislation that would increase the ability for a diverse population of social workers struggling financially to stay in the field, providing more access to behavioral health and substance use services across our state. Please consider the following:

- **Maine has a desperate need for more mental health services.** The pandemic increased the need for support and social workers have been first responders in the housing crisis, supported Mainers seeking treatment from opioid misuse and logged countless hours counseling teens in crisis. I personally receive more referrals than I can manage and often have no one to refer to. I hear the urgency on the other end of my phone, “you are the only person who called me back.”
- **Maine’s reimbursement rates are not keeping up with the economy.** The majority of my clients are insured through Mainecare, and those rates are much lower than for other insurance or in other states. Loan repayment makes it possible for social workers such as myself to continue providing mental health and addiction services to Mainers insured through Mainecare.

I owe over \$100,000 in student loan debt. Currently these loans are on hold due to pandemic relief, but that will soon end. The bilingual trauma and substance use services I provide are essential and raise the quality of life for an underserved part of our state’s population, yet the amount of my debt overwhelms me as I make decisions about how I will work in the

future, and continue to support both my family and offer equitable services to my clients. I urge you to **vote “YES”** on LD 632.

Respectfully submitted,
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