

March 29th, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is George Boynton. I am a resident of Rome and a member of the Disability Services Crisis Team. Today, I am writing to urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1041: An Act To Include Certain Mental Health Workers under the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement.

I have been a member of the Augusta DS Crisis Team since 2018. Prior to joining the Crisis Team, I worked in behavioral health at a school for six years. What the behavioral health field needs is experienced professionals. It is often difficult to retain quality behavioral health professionals, due to the nature of the work. Members of the Crisis Team often encounter hostile clients while working, as the population we serve tends to find aggression the most effective way to communicate. Additionally, we work long shifts which are typically 12-16 hours and include nights, weekends, and holidays. This means missing out on time with our families and friends, missing holidays with our children, and being prepared to take on extra shifts when our teammates need time off. This leaves many team members with an increased risk of burnout and few are likely to stay employed in these roles into their 60s.

The change to the retirement schedule will make it easier to retain team members with more experience in crisis situations and with the individual members of the community we serve. Team members will have an incentive to stay on longer instead of seeking other jobs to reach retirement age. This will ultimately lead to better outcomes for our clients and hopefully a savings of taxpayer dollars from a lack of need for additional emergency resources.

Members of the Committee, I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

George Boynton