



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 898
An Act to Create the Essential Support Workforce
Advisory Committee

Sponsored by Representative Fay
January 31, 2022

Good afternoon Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. 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 35 members of the Alliance, I am here to speak in support of the amendment to LD 898, **An Act to Create the Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee**. We commend Representative Fay for continuing the dialogue with stakeholders on this important piece of legislation and for the version before you today.

When Representative Fay as co-chair first convened the Commission to Study Long-Term Care Workforce Issues in 2019, the behavioral health workforce was not a part of the discussion. Behavioral health is usually not considered when discussing "Long-Term Care." Usually the phrase refers to care for the aging or those with physical or developmental disabilities.

However, when you look at care for people living with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, severe anxiety and some other severe mental illnesses, the care and treatment is often long term, sometimes for their entire life. The need for support on a daily or weekly basis to remain in their home safely and meet their basic needs may be present. The need for long term support in residential facilities may be needed. This is all long-term care. This care is all done by essential support workers.

Therefore, the Alliance was excited to begin participating in the discussions over the interim period since last session when the concept draft and initial amendment for LD 898 was presented to this committee.

The essential support workers employed by member agencies of the Alliance work everyday to assist people with exactly this type of daily living support so they can thrive and live their best life within their own community, whether in their own home or in a residential facility.

This amendment would create an Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee which would include membership from a well-balanced group of legislative, administrative, and educational representatives along with people from the various service delivery sectors most affected by the essential workforce shortage, and behavioral health is included. This Committee will be able to provide comprehensive meaningful advice and counsel for the Departments and the Legislature.

Please support LD 898 with a unanimous Ought to Pass vote. The workforce crisis is real and it needs real solutions informed by the field of care.

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*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. We believe 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.*