



TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

In Support Of

LD 118 – *An Act To Address Maine's Shortage of Behavioral Health Services for Minors*

February 11, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Jeffrey Austin and I am with the Maine Hospital Association and I am offering this testimony in support of LD 118.

The Maine Hospital Association (MHA) represents all 36 community-governed hospitals including 33 non-profit general acute care hospitals, 2 private psychiatric hospitals, and 1 acute rehabilitation hospital.

In addition to acute-care hospital facilities, we also represent 11 home health agencies, 18 skilled nursing facilities, 19 nursing facilities, 12 residential care facilities, and more than 300 physician practices.

There are children across this state who in need of psychiatric services but not receiving them. It is a regular issue that manifests itself in hospital emergency rooms nearly every day. Oftentimes, a care giver – parent, grandparent, group home – can no longer manage a child's behaviors and brings the child to the emergency room. The child typically does not need medical care for a physical ailment; he or she doesn't need to be in a community hospital. They need behavioral healthcare – inpatient care, outpatient care, or an appropriate long-term placement.

The dual task of caring for that child in crisis and securing the appropriate care for that child falls to the hospital. Too often the process takes days, weeks and even months. Sometimes families call the press or hold a rally at the hospital, hoping public attention will improve the situation.

Dropping off very needy children in the emergency room and hoping for a good outcome is not a plan. The state needs a plan for how these cases can be handled. This legislation challenges the state to craft a plan. We urge your support.

Thank you.