



AUGUSTA VETERANS ACUPUNCTURE CLINIC

www.AugustaVetsAcuClinic.org

March 31, 2017

Committee on Health
& Human Services
c/o Legislative Information
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear HHS Committee Members:

This letter is in support of L.D. 185 and contains some background information that the Committee may find helpful as it considers this important legislation.

The Augusta Veterans Acupuncture Clinic (AVAC) opened its doors on October 7, 2014, and has been providing free, weekly acupuncture care to veterans, active duty personnel and their families ever since. A secondary clinic operated at the Kennebec County Correctional Facility, from March 2015 to December 2016, treating incarcerated veterans, there. The volunteer acupuncturists at these clinics have provided almost 2,000 free acupuncture treatments to this deserving population of service men and women.

People come to the clinic to address physical issues, such as back and shoulder pain, headaches and migraines, fibromyalgia, knee pain, and even digestive problems. Just as importantly, they come to find relief from psycho-spiritual issues like depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, nightmares, flashbacks and other post traumatic stress (PTS) symptomology. **Veterans with alcohol and substance abuse issues and co-occurring disorders have found support to their recovery process in this acupuncture program.**

The AVAC program uses the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA) auricular acupuncture protocol as the treatment basis for this community-style clinic. This acupuncture treatment method was developed in the 1970's to treat heroin addiction in New York City. After 911, local acupuncturists used this NADA method to treat rescue workers at Ground Zero and found that it effectively supported their resilience against PTS. After that, in 2006, the group Acupuncturists Without Borders began a pilot program, the Military Stress Relief Program, to treat veterans for PTS and substance abuse. The Augusta Clinic is an outgrowth of that pilot program.

Acupuncture Clinic Site: Old CMP Building at 9 Green Street, Augusta, ME
Mailing Address: 16 Middle Street, Hallowell, ME 04347 • Phone Number: (207) 215-5817

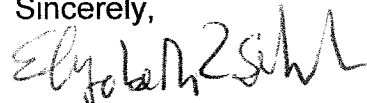
The clinic setup is as follows: participants are greeted at the door by a host/hostess volunteer and invited into the clinic; they find seats in a circle of chairs around the perimeter of our quite and comfortable treatment room; our volunteer acupuncturists go around the room placing five thin, sterile needles in each ear; participants rest quietly for 20 minutes to an hour (many people fall asleep at this point in the process); needles are removed and our clients leave, almost always reporting improvements to their symptomology and sense of well-being.

I've included with this letter a summary sheet of the kind of feedback we get from our veterans. Although these comments do not address addiction treatment, specifically, many of our participants are members of 12 Step programs while others are actively working to address issues of addiction and post traumatic stress.

The acupuncturists I've consulted at the Augusta Veterans Acupuncture Clinic support L.D. 185 and the formation of a pilot project to study acupuncture treatment for substance abuse disorders. NADA style acupuncture was developed to address exactly the issue of addiction. Studying and expanding its role in Maine will provide evidence to the effectiveness and economy of this auricular acupuncture technique to help counter and treat the exploding opioid crisis in Maine.

Please support L.D. 185. I believe you will be extremely satisfied and happy with the results of this project. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth R. Schecher
Licensed Acupuncturist
AVAC Co-Coordinator