



Department of Health and Human Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
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Senator Eric Brakey
Representative Patricia Hymanson
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

This letter is to provide information regarding LD 185, An Act to Establish a Pilot Project for Medicaid Reimbursement for Acupuncture Treatment of Substance Abuse Disorders. I would like to offer the following information for your consideration:

Current Bill:

This bill will require the Department to apply for authorization from the Federal United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to develop a pilot project to treat alcohol abuse disorders, substance abuse disorders and co-occurring disorders using the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association auricular acupuncture protocol.

Background:

Acupuncture is considered an alternative treatment for substance use disorders. It has been used in conjunction with other evidence-based treatments but not as a stand-alone treatment. A review of literature from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) does not recognize acupuncture as an evidence-based practice for the treatment of alcohol abuse disorders, substance abuse disorders and co-occurring disorders. SAMHSA Treatment Improvement Protocol 45 (Tip 45) notes that acupuncture may be useful for retaining patients in treatment but not as a stand-alone treatment as it has not been subjected to rigorous controlled research. Due to the lack of evidence supporting acupuncture for the treatment of substance use disorders, costs associated with this service may not be reimbursable by insurance companies.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide to above information for consideration as the bill goes forward. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Wheeler, Director
Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services