

# MaineHealth

## MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community  
Health Network  
LincolnHealth  
MaineHealth Care At Home  
Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
Memorial Hospital  
Maine Medical Center  
Mid Coast-Parkview Health  
NorDx  
Pen Bay Medical Center  
Southern Maine Health Care  
Waldo County General Hospital  
Western Maine Health

## Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable  
Care Organization

## MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health  
New England Rehabilitation  
Hospital of Portland  
St. Mary's Health System

## Testimony of Kelly Barton, MaineHealth In Strong Support of LD 1262, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Develop a Comprehensive Statewide Strategic Plan to Serve Maine People with Behavioral Health Needs Throughout Their Lifespans” Monday, April 12, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Kelly Barton, President of Spring Harbor Hospital, and I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 1262, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Develop a Comprehensive Statewide Strategic Plan to Serve Maine People with Behavioral Health Needs Throughout Their Lifespans.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. As part of our mission of “Working Together So Maine’s Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth, which includes Maine Behavioral Healthcare, is committed to creating a seamless system of behavioral healthcare across Maine, coordinating hospital psychiatric care with community-based treatment services, and better access to behavioral healthcare through integration with primary care services.

I am here to testify in strong support of this legislation for three reasons:

1. Our behavioral health system is fragmented, under-resourced and failing people in need;
2. The behavioral health needs of our population are growing; and
3. Governmental investments in the system will be most effective if they are informed with the input and buy-in of providers, consumers and families.

Medicaid is the largest payer of behavioral health care (mental health and substance use disorder) in the United States, and it is our largest payer here in Maine. In addition, studies show that behavioral health conditions contribute to a greater cost to treat than other medical conditions. As Maine grapples with increased demand for behavioral health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as Maine receives federal support to address the behavioral

health crisis, it is time to bring the stakeholders together to develop a statewide strategic plan for behavioral health that is based upon a thorough assessment of our current strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. The current system was broken prior to the pandemic and COVID-19 has only intensified its crumbling.

We all know that building a robust system of behavioral health services is complex. Complexity requires innovation and thinking beyond how we have ever done things. No one entity or individual can do it alone and we definitely can't do it in silos. We may all have different roles in the behavioral health system, but in essence, we are all one TEAM and through the wisdom of Phil Jackson, "The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." Without a strategic vision that engages all of the stakeholders we will continue to have a fragmented, far from adequate system that fails to meet the needs of Maine's residents. Many states are in similar positions and are taking a proactive approach to engaging key stakeholders from all pieces of the continuum of care.

Any pathway to address the Mission and Vision should include:

- The full picture outcome we want for today and tomorrow;
- The barriers at the regional, state, and national levels (i.e. hiring professionals);
- The input of the key stakeholders; and
- A holistic focus.

The focus should include:

- Person-centered – that includes a full continuum of care and minimal administrative burden.
- Innovative – strong partnerships and accessible to clients and providers.
- Data-driven – facilitating smooth referrals and be easy to use.
- Evidenced based – focused on minimizing silos and be expedient.
- Peer-driven – has to function with payor sources and be transparent.
- Culturally competent – inclusive of shared populations with expedient access to care.

- Trauma Informed.

We recognize that it has been many years since investment was made behavioral health services, including planning, and this Department has had an unprecedented crisis to contend with at the same time. But we have reached a crisis point and we can no longer wait for future action. The State is receiving millions in pandemic resources to support behavioral health care, and now is the time to engage stakeholders with how best to use them.

We cannot lose sight of the significant gaps throughout the continuum. At every level of care that we operate, we either don't have enough capacity or, in some cases, the State doesn't have the needed service at all. For example:

- Spring Harbor Hospital continues to see an increase in demand for inpatient services with an overall growth rate of close to 10%.
- In 2020, we had an average of 25 patients waiting in EDs for psychiatric beds every day, adolescents are in need of secure units, and people with development disabilities need services.
- Despite a 17% increase in Outpatient Psychiatry capacity since 2015, wait times are 6 months or more for non-emergent cases.
- In 2019, the average waiting list for Outpatient Psychiatry was 425 patients.
- We have a shortage of psychiatrists, reimbursement that does not begin to cover the cost for community services, and other providers are being forced to close programs altogether.

Imagine if a member of your family needed services, the current access barriers and infrastructure weaknesses affect everyone. Between State, Federal, and grant funding, a strategic solution would cover 46% of the Maine population (20% Medicaid, 18% Medicare, and 8% uninsured). An infrastructure which can partner with other payers also allows all of Maine's population to gain access to services. Is this acceptable if you need service? Your family members?

In closing, we have used the same approach for years to build a robust behavioral health continuum of care in the State of Maine and the results... The system is crumbling – access is limited, key services are missing, and we continue to work in silos. In the wise words of Henry Ford, “If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've got.” So I would

advocate now is the time to come together and finally develop a system of behavioral health services that the State of Maine can be proud of.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer questions. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.