

# 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  
Synernet  
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 Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of

### LD 1293, “An Act to Improve Access to Certain Injectable Medications for Treatment of Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorder” Thursday, April 15, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1293, “An Act to Improve Access to Certain Injectable Medications for Treatment of Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorder.”

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 (MBH), 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.

Over the last five years and in response to the opioid epidemic, MaineHealth developed a multifaceted prevention, education and treatment model to address the substance use epidemic facing our state. Our treatment model provides high quality, evidence-based outpatient services to individuals with substance use disorder in each of our local health systems, with MBH providing intensive treatment to patients when they are most acute and primary care practices and their integrated behavioral health clinicians serving patients who are more stable. As of March 1, 2021, our programs served 1,737 patients in this year alone and 72% of our patients exceed an average length of stay of 90 days.

Despite this important work, the pandemic is placing new burdens on access to behavioral health services. Suicide rates, which were already high in Maine, are increasing and overdose deaths are at record levels. It is for that reason that we are supporting the legislation before you today, which will increase access to long-acting injectable medication used to treat mental illness and substance use disorder. In combination with counseling, these medications are very effective and can be lifesaving. Expanding access is critical as we seek to address this epidemic within the pandemic.

We do have concerns, however, with the bill language related to the administration of long-acting injectable medication used to treat mental illness. We would urge the Committee to amend the legislation to reflect that long-acting injectable therapy used to treat mental illness should not be modified or discontinued by the pharmacist without the approval and consultation of the patient's behavioral health provider. Unlike long-acting injectable medication used to treat substance use disorder, changes in antipsychotic medication can have significant and often uncertain clinical effects, including symptom exacerbation. Additionally, more frequent patient visits with their behavioral health provider are often needed during the period of time post-switch. Great care should be taken before changing or discontinuing long-acting injectable medication used to treat mental illness.

For those reasons, I urge the Committee to accept this amendment and vote Ought to Pass on LD 1293. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.