

Testimony of Karen Evans
Before the Health and Human Services Committee
In Strong Support of LD 1470
“Resolve, Regarding Reimbursement for Providing Inpatient Care to Individuals
with Acute Mental Health Needs”
April 27, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Karen Evans and I live in Portland.

Please take a minute with me to visualize what a patient suffers as they wait for care during 31 hours holding in the emergency room.

1. I personally felt the power of hell had invaded in me as I suffered voices telling me I must be punished, I must die.
2. Other patients would deal with having cut themselves because of their mental health issues.
3. And others would be dealing with the anguish of the soul because of the depression that allowed them to try to kill themselves. These 31 hours would be taxing on anyone, and especially people distraught with mental illness. Where is the dignity and respect to each of these individuals?

In as much as my work with the homeless in Tent City caused me to address the immediate need of shelter for that population, I feel that MaineHealth was probably moved with that same extent of compassion when they realized that mental health consumers were in ED s for days, weeks and months. They went ahead and built the beds to try to meet the needs of the mental health population.

As a prior member of the Maine Behavioral Health Care Board, I had the opportunity to visit the new psychiatric units in Sanford. I was impressed by the layout of the units and the care that went into the design. It was a welcoming place – as much as hospitals can be!

The community needs of the mental health population have been best seen in the need for medication management, psychiatric services, mental health counseling, and support of inpatient hospital beds for the rare instances when high acuity demands it. While the State needs to invest more resources in all community services, this bill will address the much needed inpatient beds, especially as it pertains to the situation with rates for the Sanford beds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions.