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 510, "Resolve, To Reduce Stigma Regarding Substance
Use Disorder by Requiring the Use of Respectful Language
in the MaineCare Benefits Manual and Other Department
of Health and Human Services Publications"
Wednesday, March 17, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 510, "Resolve, To Reduce Stigma Regarding Substance Use Disorder by Requiring the Use of Respectful Language in the MaineCare Benefits Manual and Other Department of Health and Human Services Publications."

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. Over the last five years, MaineHealth has invested in a multifaceted model to address the substance use epidemic facing our state. Today, we have over 1,100 patients in treatment in every county we serve.

Substance use disorder is a disease of isolation. Stigma adds to the challenges people face in seeking treatment. The language we use in describing substance use disorder must reflect the respect, dignity, and compassion for those who face this challenging disease. As such, we strive to use language that is inclusive, welcoming, recovery-oriented, and free of the judgement and shaming that is all too often a reality for those with mental health or substance use disorders.

When we use terms like "substance abuse," we are complicit in labeling people suffering from an illness as "abusers." This makes them feel more shame, less connected, and less willing to reach out for help. With that said, I thank this Committee for its support of legislation (LD 1871; Public Law 2018, Chapter 407) in the 128th Legislature that removed stigmatizing

language from State statute. This bill will make those same updates to the MaineCare Benefits Manual.

By supporting LD 510, you have the ability to promote hope and reduce stigma. If we intend to create a community that encourages people to seek peer support and treatment, then we first need to talk about how we use inclusive and welcoming language.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.