

**Testimony of Dr. Jonathan Fellers
MaineHealth
In Support of LD 107**

“An Act to Increase the Effectiveness of Opioid Addiction Therapy”

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am sorry not to be able to attend today’s hearing to voice my support for this bill in person. Ironically, Maine Medical Center is hosting a statewide conference on the opioid epidemic, and I have a long-standing commitment to speak at the conference.

LD 107 would remove the artificial two-year limit that the Department has placed on medication-assisted treatment for MaineCare patients. As I mentioned when I presented to you earlier this month, addiction is a chronic disease. Thankfully, opioid addiction is a disease for which there is evidence-based treatment available through a combination of medication and behavioral health treatment. Much like insulin with diabetes, MAT stabilizes patients and allows them to function normally. The Department’s current policy arbitrarily limits payment for medication used to treat opioid use disorder to two years. Can you imagine the outcry if coverage for insulin was limited to two years?

The opioid epidemic has touched all of the communities served by MaineHealth. Medication-assisted treatments, including buprenorphine products (i.e. Suboxone) provide a lifeline for patients with opioid use disorder. Addiction is a chronic health condition that must be treated as such. The current 24-month limit on buprenorphine products for the treatment of opioid use disorder is arbitrary, non-evidence based and ultimately harmful to our communities as the limit only serves to limit access to life-saving medication. LD 107 would remove this barrier, thereby 1) reducing the administrative burden of requesting exemptions from the rule, and 2) eliminating costs associated with interrupting care for this chronic condition.

Thank you, and I can make myself available to answer questions if that would be helpful.

MaineHealth

Act with
kindness and
compassion.

Be an active
listener.

Be a role
model.

Set high
standards.

Take
responsibility.

Embrace
change.