



Committee on Health and Human Services
c/o Kerri Withee, Legislative Information Office
Cross Building, Room 209
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD196:

Dear Senator Claxton , Representative Meyer, and other members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Jerry Marx. I am a resident of Portland and Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. There are over 5,000 licensed social workers providing health services to individuals and families throughout the state. We are the largest provider of mental health services in the nation.

NASW Maine supports LD196, Resolve, To Insure Access to Community Mental Health Services. My understanding is that this resolve, submitted by Senator Breen of Cumberland and co-sponsored by Representative Warren of Hallowell, directs the Department of Health and Human Services to amend its rule Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter III, Sections 17 and 65 to increase reimbursement rates for daily living support services and any home and community-based services provided by behavioral health professionals by 15%.

A 2019 NASW Maine survey of 5,000 social workers revealed that low pay and low reimbursement rates for services are social workers' two highest concerns. These conditions contribute to social work shortages and other challenges in meeting client needs, particularly in more rural parts of Maine. Notably, low reimbursement contributes directly to independent clinicians choosing not to accept MaineCare clients, decreasing access to services for clients who tend to have a higher rate of substance use disorders and other mental illness than the general population. Increasing reimbursement and ensuring access to behavioral health care are critical steps in ensuring that effective services are available and accessible.

This resolve will help to insure access to community mental health services at a time when the state and nation continues to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. I urge you all to vote yes on LD196.

Respectfully submitted,

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Executive Director
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References:

NASW, Maine Chapter. (2021) *About*.

<https://naswme.socialworkers.org/About#:~:text=The%20NASW%2DMaine%20Chapter%2C%20with,work%20organization%20in%20the%20state.&text=Professional%20social%20workers%20are%20the,of%20mental%20health%20service%20providers>.