To: Chairs of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
From: Lisa Prickett, LCSW, Falmouth, Maine
Date: February 17, 2026
Re: LD 2082 - An Act to Regulate the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Providing Certain Mental Health Services

Honorable Committee Chairs and Members,

My name is Lisa Prickett. I am a resident of Falmouth. I am also a board member for the Maine chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). I am writing today to express my strong support for LD 2082, which would ensure that critical mental health services remain under the care of licensed human professionals.

I have been a licensed clinical social worker for 30+ years. During that time, I've worked in a psychiatric hospital for 7 years, in a community mental health organization for 14 years and for the past 8 years in private practice. I moved to Maine in 2023 from the Washington, DC metropolitan area for my husband's work and brought many of my former clients with me. I now see clients virtually via Zoom. I am also licensed to practice in Maine and have clients here as well. Until I moved here my practice was entirely in person. Even during Covid I saw clients in person, with windows and doors open and masks on. The personal contact between therapists and clients is unparalleled. Much of the information we glean from our clients must be seen to be understood.

Artificial intelligence inherently lacks the empathy and connection that can only be developed between two human beings. Empathy is the source of much of the psychotherapist's work. A computer cannot read body language to tell if a person is slumped over in a chair or feeling distraught. Body language is a huge source of information for a therapist and helps us decode a person's feelings, even if their words tell a different story. A computer cannot tell if a person is crying and sounding desperate for help and connection. As we know from suicide hotlines, that compassion and connection can be the difference between life and death for an individual. If I have a client in desperation, I can call 911 and have them seen at a psychiatric hospital within hours. Only a human being can make that kind of judgment. A computer doesn't have the nuanced understanding that a human has.

One of the main skills I have as a therapist is knowing which kind of therapeutic intervention is suitable in which situation. Perhaps a client would benefit from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) because they need skills and tools to manage their anxiety symptoms. Or perhaps they would benefit from Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) to learn to manage their emotions more effectively. Or perhaps a client is abusing alcohol and needs a treatment program. Maybe a client would benefit from couples' therapy because they have conflict in their marriage. In some cases, the first thing a therapist needs to do is assess the safety of a client. Artificial intelligence lacks the ability to make clinical judgments that only a trained professional can make. My training as a social worker was two years of graduate school, two years working full time under the guidance of a supervising senior therapist, and another year of specialized training as a couples' therapist. I also take 40 hours of continuing education every two years and participate in a monthly supervision group with seasoned colleagues. It takes a long time to learn the skills and hone the judgment of a well-trained therapist.

One of the main concerns I have about artificial intelligence is for the safety of young people. As we all know, kids and teens spend way too much time on screens. This is common knowledge. Social skills and human interaction among young people is greatly lacking. Isolation among young people is a huge problem. Artificial intelligence may be an easy way for a young person to seek help, but it does nothing to create connection with another person. Suicide among young people is at epidemic levels in this country. The factors and variables are numerous. Artificial intelligence can't protect a child from acting on suicidal impulses and may actually explain how best to do it. Young people are too vulnerable and unsophisticated to know when a bot is helping or harming them. This is a risk we can't afford to take.

In sum, I ask you to pass LD 2082 - An Act to Regulate the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Providing Certain Mental Health Services. The mental health of Maine's citizens should not be compromised.

Sincerely,
Lisa Prickett, LCSW