

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: LD496: An Act To Clear Waiting Lists for and Ensure Timely Access to Mental Health Services for Maine Children

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.

NASW Maine supports LD496. My understanding is that the bill, submitted by Representative Gramlich of Old Orchard Beach, would benefit children receiving mental health services funded by MaineCare in behavioral health agencies, children's homes, community-based treatment facilities, and child care facilities in Maine. More specifically, this bill will require the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to amend its policies to increase MaineCare reimbursement rates for child mental health services by July 1st of this year.

According to the Maine Children's Alliance, Maine has some of the highest rates of diagnosed childhood anxiety and depression in the nation. Teen suicide is above the national average in Maine. The pandemic of 2020 has, no doubt, only exacerbated these problems.

These children are the future leaders and workforce of Maine. They are our children. I urge you all to vote yes on LD496.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Marx, PhD
Executive Director
NASW Maine Chapter
jmarx.naswme@socialworkers.org

References:

Wight, P. (2019, March 28). Maine has the nation's highest rate of anxiety in children, report finds. *Maine Public and the Bangor Daily News*. <https://bangordailynews.com/2019/03/28/news/maine-has-the-nations-highest-rate-of-anxiety-in-children-report-finds/>