

Maine Coalition for Housing and Quality Services

March 19, 2013

Senator Margaret M. Craven, Representative Richard R. Farnsworth, Senator Dawn Hill, Representative Margaret Rotundo, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services and Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

I am the Chair of the Maine Coalition for Housing and Quality Services (MCHQS). I am writing this letter on behalf of the Coalition. MCHQS includes some 4000 people, mostly parents, but also relatives, concerned friends, and caregivers for people with developmental/intellectual disabilities in Maine. The Coalition voted unanimously to support LD 499, "An Act to Promote Dental Care for Low-Income Populations". We are very concerned and strongly oppose the proposed cuts to the Preble Street Dental Clinic.

The services provided by the Clinic are vitally important to our community. They serve over 3000 adults with mental illness or intellectual/developmental disabilities and logged over 4000 patient visits in 2012. These patients came from all over the state because dental services for this population, who are served by MaineCare, are very difficult to find. Most dentists in Maine will not accept patients who have MaineCare because of the low reimbursement rate. The Preble Street Clinic is the only dental clinic in Maine that provides IV sedation for patients who are compromised such that care cannot be administered without it. Illustrating the critical need for the Clinic, 224 case managers have 2-4 patients each that are currently waiting for dental care.

The cost to keep the Clinic in operation is modest: \$797,000. This is a much more fiscally responsible way of delivering dental care to this community than relying on emergency room visits. According to a 2010 study conducted by the Muskie School of Public Service, emergency room visits to Maine Medical Center for dental problems cost the state over \$7,176,000.

We urge you and your colleagues on the Health and Human Services Committee to support and recommend passage of LD 499.

Sincerely,

Cullen Ryan, Chair