

## ORAL PRESENTATION

Senator Diamond, Representative Cain, and members of the Appropriations Committee; Senator Brannigan, Representative Perry, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, thank you for hearing our testimony today. I represent The Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians,

**We** are frightened by the prospect of jails, emergency rooms and homeless shelters overflowing with people, our patients, who can no longer get the care they need.

**We** fear the unintended costs and consequences of these cuts have not been fully evaluated. These cuts are potentially dangerous, and definitely wasteful.

**And** the loss of federal matching funds triples the overall loss of funding in many cases.

**These** cuts are going to magnify the difficulties Maine has in recruiting and retaining primary care and psychiatric physicians;

**Public** safety is at risk if there is no one to review critical incidents, or to monitor decisions made by contracted agencies. Mental Health Medical Directors, if used to the fullest extent, will keep relevant, pertinent, practical clinical matters **in constant focus at DHHS.**

**We** ask you to re-consider elimination of the psychiatrist medical director positions for Children and Adolescents and for the Office of Adult Mental Health Services.

**MAPP** also urges this Legislature to fund a mechanism, that will monitor the quality of services that DHHS purchases in the future. This mechanism should provide transparent data to the public so that the Legislature and the public (and DHHS!) can be assured that the massive

amount of money that DHHS spends on health care and mental health care is being spent well.

**We strongly urge you to appoint a Blue Ribbon Panel to make rational, informed decisions on mental health spending and on the proposed budget cuts.**

**We feel it is crucial for you to have the guidance of many voices, from consumers to emergency room, primary care and psychiatric physicians, and other groups who are directly involved in the realities of day-to-day patient care.**

[Dr Barnhart's examples]

**The Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians urges you to do your best to protect your constituents by making sure that the money that is being spent on mental health care is being spent in a rational, informed manner, with medical and consumer input. We are afraid that the current budget does not meet that standard.**

**If, despite best efforts, cuts alone are too harmful for Maine's citizens to bear, we urge you to consider raising fees or taxes. It is the humane and right thing to do.**

**Thank you.**