

February 4, 2009

The Honorable Justin L. Alford, Senate Chair
The Honorable Patricia B. Sutherland, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
Room 202, Cross State Office Building
Augusta, Maine 04330

**RE: L.D. 98, RESOLVE, TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES TO REQUIRE THE
TEACHING OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS
BASED UPON A NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

Dear Senator Alford, Representative Sutherland, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs:

I am writing on behalf of the Maine Medical Association (MMA) and the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians (MAPP) in support of L.D. 98. The MMA is a professional organization of more than 3000 Maine physicians, residents, and medical students whose mission is “to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine citizens.” The MAPP represents more than 200 Maine physicians who specialize in diseases of the brain.

Physicians recognize that Maine schools already are being called upon to do extraordinary things in the education of our children during a time of declining resources and they are sensitive to the burdens of “unfunded mandates.” However, as our society continues efforts to reduce the stigma of mental illness and to improve our understanding of mental diseases, this is an initiative that is overdue and would be ideal for presentation to middle school students. MAPP members have reviewed *The Science of Mental Illness: National Institutes of Health Curriculum Supplement for Middle School* and believe it is an excellent national curriculum based upon scientific and medical evidence. This curriculum should be coordinated with current suicide prevention efforts in our state. Finally, it would be important to include a Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist practicing in a community setting on the planning team. The MMA and MAPP both would be happy to work with the two state agencies and other interested parties on this initiative.

Thank you for considering the views of Maine physicians on L.D. 98.

Sincerely,

Andrew B. MacLean