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September 25, 2023

Dear Members of the Maine Recovery Council:

We need your help. As you may be aware, York County has embarked on two initiatives of significance at both the Regional and State levels – a Regional Recovery, Treatment, and Outpatient Center (the Center), and a Regional Public Safety/Health Training Facility. In 2022, the State of Maine lost one person every day from addiction and overdose. In the same year, York County responded to 1,722 overdoses, 61 of which were fatal. To address the opioid epidemic, we propose the use of ARPA and opioid settlement funds to develop a 58-bed Regional Recovery, Treatment, and Outpatient Services Center.

Operated by York County Government, the Center will fill a critical need in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. The Center will provide a continuum of care including three residential treatment programs, one detox program, two levels of outpatient care, and wrap-around case management services. Extensive time and attention have been given to understanding the challenges York County faces regarding SUD. Mental health clinicians and first responders for the County have gathered evidence on our current responses to addiction and have looked at best practices in the field of SUD, arguing the need for a regional treatment center. Our proposed center will exceed the current standards in the field, affording countless individuals and families life-saving interventions, supports, and services.

York County recently formed a partnership with Sanford Housing Authority and contributed funds to the Housing First Project, a no-barrier housing opportunity for individuals who enter and exit recovery, return to use, or are not ready to begin treatment. This partnership and financial commitment from the County will have two primary outcomes. First, 30 affordable rental units will be constructed in Sanford to house individuals who engage with the Center but have not yet entered treatment. Second, Sanford Housing Authority will take existing housing stock to create affordable housing communities structured to support long-term recovery, available to individuals who complete treatment at the Center. Ultimately, this will encourage individuals to enter treatment and maintain sobriety, creating safer communities.

Many residential treatment programs in Maine are at capacity and do not accept individuals in need of detoxification. Sadly, York County does not have detox beds, which has forced individuals to leave the community to get the help needed. By providing an 8-bed detox unit in the Center, individuals can safely detox and then transition to one of three levels of residential treatment, all at the same facility to ensure continuity of

care resulting in higher rates of success. Nothing in York County, or the State of Maine, exists to address the challenges discussed in this letter. This is an opportunity for Maine to become a national model in substance use treatment service delivery.

In addition to the Recovery Center, the County will build a Regional Public Safety/Health Training Facility. An agreement has been made with York County Community College to deliver programs to meet the training needs of the Fire Service, Police Service, EMS Service, and Public Health workers. Stakeholders in these professions identified a deficit in the frequency and relevancy of available trainings. With cutting-edge equipment and facilities, the Training Facility will attract prospective employees and improve public safety/health workforce development in Southern Maine.

York County is focused on its commitment to address the state's response to the opioid epidemic and our investment in workforce development for public safety personnel. No other governmental entity has approached these critical issues with such vigor.

As previously stated, we need your help. York County is at an inflection point with the development of these two projects, and frankly, with opioid deaths continuing to rise and public safety personnel requiring advanced training, there is no valid reason to delay. The estimated cost of this project has risen to \$45M. As you are aware, building supplies and labor costs have increased significantly in the last few years. Our initial estimates of \$38M would have been manageable utilizing our ARPA allocation, opioid funding, and other funding sources. However, we now are faced with a roughly \$7M shortfall for the development of the project.

Nevertheless, York County is committed to moving forward in addressing the substance misuse in our community and offering a real solution with projected success that will amount to financial savings to the County as well as developing the next generation of public safety personnel. I am certain you would agree that these worthwhile projects can and should receive widespread support, but we need to close the funding gap.

Some have suggested that the county should choose one project over the other. We firmly believe both projects are critically needed and are intertwined. We need well trained public safety/health personnel and a contemporary facility that can treat and support a person from detox through residential treatment, and into aftercare. Many informed conversations in the state of Maine surround treatment and recovery services and its effects on public safety. Conversely, every conversation about public safety involves opioid and substance abuse response.

I hope you agree that this project is a worthwhile investment, one that the Recovery Council should be proud to support. We are seeking your assistance to fill our \$7M gap. We want the Recovery Council to be part of these innovative programs and are hopeful you will support this impactful project.

Sincerely,

Richard Clark, York County Commissioner

Donna Ring, York County Commissioner

Richard Dutremble, York County Commissioner

William King, York County Sheriff

Kathryn Slattery, York County District Attorney

Greg Zinser, York County Manager

Linda Corliss, York County Deputy Manager

Rachel Stansfield, York County Development Director

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Nathan Thayer, York County Jail Administrator

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