

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 26, 2021

Ms. Lea Carroll
Public Health Analyst
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane, Mainstop 10SWH03
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Ms. Carroll:

We write in support of the application submitted by the Aroostook Mental Health Center (AMHC) and its project consortium members to the Health Resources and Services Administration Rural Communities Opioid Response Program. If approved, this grant would support AMHC's work to reduce the prevalence and mortality of substance use disorders, including opioid use disorders, in northern Maine.

Thousands of Mainers are struggling with drug addiction. In 2020, 503 Mainers died from a drug overdose, and over 90% of those deaths involved at least one opioid alone or in combination with other drugs or alcohol. Newborns are not immune from this troubling trend; since 2012, the number of babies born with drug and substance addiction has nearly doubled in Aroostook County from 8.7% to 16.2% in 2020. In an effort to turn the tide on the drug and opioid crisis in rural Aroostook County, Aroostook Mental Health Center and a consortium of law enforcement and community organizations formed the Aroostook Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (ACORP) in 2020 to educate the community on the dangers of drug and opioid use, to break down systemic cultural stigmas around drug use and recovery, and to provide the people of Aroostook County with the accessibility of services they need to combat this public health emergency.

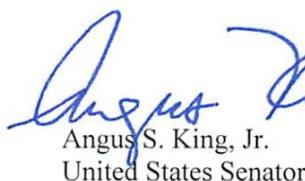
If funded for the three-year implementation grant, ACORP will have the resources necessary to take action to combat the drug and opioid crisis and execute its mission to implement, expand, and enhance the prevention, treatment, and recovery activities in one of Maine's most rural and impoverished regions.

Thank for your time and effort on behalf of the Aroostook Mental Health Center. We urge your careful consideration of its application, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you please notify Trevor Hustus (Collins) at (202) 224-2523, Adam Lachman (King) at (202) 224-5344, and Dan Jenkins (Golden) at (207) 241-6767 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress