



## **Consumer Council System of Maine**

**A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services**

[www.maineccsm.org](http://www.maineccsm.org)

### **CCSM Issue Subcommittee Office of Consumer Affairs Concept Draft 12/11/19**

Maine historically had an Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) and at various times it represented different disability groups. In the 1990's there was a cross disabilities OCA that worked under the DHHS Commissioner. In the 2000's there was a specific OCA office that was under the umbrella of the Office of Adult Mental Health Services (OAMHS). When the CCSM came into being, the State said that it would be the go-to-organization that would advise OAMHS as it was called at that time so there would be no need for an Office of Consumer Affairs.

What we know now through experience, is that because the CCSM is outside of State Government, we cannot be part of advising them on certain aspects of the work they do. For instance, we cannot help them write RFPs' (Request for Proposals) for service. An example of how this impacts our fellow peers and is not a good use of the State's time and money was demonstrated by the most recent RFP for the Intentional Warm Line program. Because this proposal would have reduced the operational hours of the Warm Line limiting peer access across Maine we had to mobilize our fellow peers to let the state, legislators and even the governor know how detrimental this would be to those who use this very valuable service. The RFP was pulled, but a lot of time and money went into writing something that had peers been at the table through OCA, this harmful action could have been prevented. It is because of examples like the one above we are asking DHHS to bring back an Office of Consumer Affairs with a 4 staff member team one of which would be the director who would be part of the senior management team.

### **We Want to Hear From You:**

To submit feedback, ideas or a personal story relating to this issue statement, please send to the CCSM either by mail at: 219 Capitol Street, Suite 7, Augusta, ME 04330 or email at [vmccarty@maineccsm.org](mailto:vmccarty@maineccsm.org)

**DEADLINE TO RESPOND: January 8, 2020**

Thank you