

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Regina Schulman and I live in Haverhill, Massachusetts. I am writing to testify *in support of* LD 1425, An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services. I am a faculty member with The Center for Mind Body Medicine, a non-profit organization with a public health approach to transforming trauma. I have been traveling to the Maine Resiliency Center (MRC) since January, 2024, to offer mind-body support groups for MRC guests who were present at the mass shootings on October 25, 2023. Most recently, the MRC has expanded the group as a mind-body skills group to include community members who were not physically present at the shootings yet still impacted by the event.

For many guests, attending the support groups at MRC in January, 2024 was the first time they saw each other after the mass shootings. Some the guests were still dealing with injuries from the night of the shooting. For more than half of the group it was the first post-shooting “official outing” other than going to the grocery store and/or to work. The common themes during the initial support groups were debilitating fear, anxiety, anger, survivor guilt, feeling frozen, foggy memories, constant vigilance and heightened awareness, exhaustion, difficulty with sleep, short-tempered, altered/changed (not for the better), hopeless and helpless, wanting to get past hurt and anger and not being able to, deep grief and sadness. Themes also included triggers while driving by the bowling alley and Subway (where a number of people fled to hide the night of the shooting) on the way to work and home, not being able to wear or throw away the clothing worn during the tragic event and loud sounds such as doors slamming. After hearing from others with a shared traumatic experience, guests realized they were not alone and not crazy. They were grateful to know that they were experiencing a normal response to an acute trauma.

Week after week, themes continued to shift from the first six months, to the one-year, to the eighteen month anniversary. Over time guests reported feeling grounded, calm, peaceful, present. They noticed they were not holding their breath, the absence of anxiety, and an emerging hope for a new normal way of life. And triggers continue to surface as well as ongoing gratitude for having a safe place to be authentic with others who have had a shared traumatic experience. Guests have repeatedly shared their appreciation for the family like environment they have felt with the support of the MRC. Many guests have joined the many MRC community offerings, which include family game nights, trauma informed yoga, introduction to American Sign Language (many victims and survivors are part of the Deaf community and they want to be able to communicate with one another), youth support groups, and many creative art and family events.

It has been deeply humbling and stunning to witness the resiliency and healing emerge in this MRC community over the past eighteen months. It is vitally important for these services to continue, and for the MRC to continue serving even more people impacted by trauma in the future. For these reasons, I urge you to vote *for* 1425. Please be in touch if I can answer questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Regina Schulman (978-985-4696)