

Testimony of Mary Jane Grant

In Support of LD 1425: *“An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services”*

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Baldacci and Representative Meyer

May 7, 2025

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer and members of the committee,

My name is Mary Jane Grant. I am a lifelong resident of Sanford, a mother of four, and the daughter of two Deaf parents. I have worked as a sign language interpreter in Maine for nearly 30 years and am also an international speaker who advocates for access, healing, and inclusive care, especially for communities too often left behind. This work is not abstract to me. It is rooted in lived experience.

Bear with me here. This may sound personal, but I promise it connects to the heart of LD 1425.

I grew up in a home where unhealed trauma lived quietly in the background. My mother, a Deaf woman, survived a violent assault, but there were no support services available in her language. No trauma-informed care. Absolutely no accessible support. That trauma stayed in her body for decades.

Today, she lives in a long-term care facility with dementia. Research has shown that trauma changes the brain and increases the risk of neurodegenerative diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's. Decades of unaddressed trauma can leave lasting neurological impacts, especially when care is inaccessible. My mother's body, the one that gave me life, carried pain no one helped her release. And I feel that pain in my bones.

On October 25, I lost a family member in the Lewiston shooting, someone who was also a friend and colleague. While grieving, I helped coordinate interpreting services so Deaf community members could access trauma recovery in their language. We showed up while holding our own pain and made sure no one was left out.

For too long, Deaf Mainers have been excluded from crisis response systems. LD 1425 helps ensure that no one is left out of the healing process due to barriers.

The Maine Resiliency Center changed everything. For the Deaf community, it meant finally being seen, heard, and supported. The trauma recovery supports made a world of difference for so many. For interpreters like me, who are present during life's hardest moments, it was the first time we were acknowledged as frontline workers and offered care ourselves. We carry these stories in our bodies. Most of the time, we do it silently.

LD 1425 is not about any one group. It is about ensuring that all Mainers, survivors, caregivers, interpreters, and community members have access to the care they need to heal. It expands a model that is inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in dignity.

We are fortunate to live in a time when research and lived experience show us that trauma can be healed, not just endured. When we invest in accessible recovery, we do not just ease suffering. We build a stronger, more compassionate Maine.

Thank you for your time and your hearts.

Sincerely,

Mary Jane Grant

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