

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Joanna Stokinger and I live in Winslow. I am here to testify in support of LD 1425, An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services.

I am the Lead Advocate at the Maine Resiliency Center (MRC); I was part of the initial group of four victim advocates assigned to work with the homicide victims the day after the Lewiston shooting and currently, I work exclusively with anyone impacted by 10/25 at the MRC. I have had a 20-year career, much of that in victim services in a prosecution or pre-release setting. I began my career as a crime victim advocate in 2002. I'm a nationally certified victim advocate and since 2021, the grandmother of a homicide victim. I am the co-leader for the Maine Chapter of the Parents Of Murdered Children, Inc. although I am not speaking on behalf of POMC today. I testify on behalf of the MRC and Mainers who experience traumatic events because I serve those Mainers and I am one of those Mainers.

We at the MRC see daily how much of an impact the center and its programs have had on the people that come through our doors. You will hear from many of them in person and in writing, and their voices will be more impactful than mine in telling you how the MRC has had an impact. A few examples of what we do at the MRC are:

- I and my colleagues have assisted some of the people we work with by attending IEP meetings with parents and teachers as an advocate to assure that the impacted student is heard, and their trauma responses are explained.
- MRC staff has accompanied individuals that are uncomfortable with going back to the bowling alley and have personally stepped aside with them to hold hands and just breathe with them to get past the fear and frozen states.
- Staff has researched with people and provided referrals to vocational rehabilitation and secondary educational opportunities.
- We have communicated with employers for individuals that have a hard time explaining their trauma responses.
- We have sat in silence with people who didn't know how they felt or what to say or how to be in that moment.

Maine has processes in place for assistance for statutory crime victims, domestic violence victims and survivors, sex assault victims and survivors, and survivors of human trafficking that are currently funded. These amazing advocates work for agencies in the community and in prosecution and courtroom settings. There is a huge gap, however and funding this bill can help fill that gap in tangible ways. We can work alongside current advocates to support Mainers experiencing trauma.

Here are some examples of Mainers that experience trauma but don't have advocates available to them or know where to go to address the trauma and post traumatic stress that they experienced. Many of these are examples of cases I have worked on personally

while I was a federally and state funded Victim Witness Advocate with the Attorney General's Homicide Union.

- The school principal that discovered surveillance video of a murder on the elementary school playground one night.
- The man who answered the door late one night to a man screaming on his porch, his hands nearly severed and called 911.
- The friends of a murdered girl who searched for her with someone they thought was their friend but was her rapist and murderer.
- The woman who called 911 when she woke up and found a deceased law enforcement officer on her front lawn.
- The mother who finds her son in his room- a son who died by suicide.
- The father who discovers his daughter after a drug overdose.
- The families of individuals that die by justified means; the deceased individual may have been engaging in behavior that contributed to their deaths, but the surviving family of that deceased person did not, and they are experiencing trauma.
- The grandmother who is raising her grandchildren in her retirement years because her child died in a murder/suicide.
- The owners of a box truck that was the scene of the murder and arson of two people.
- Landlords who must clean up and renovate violent crime scenes – insurance may cover them financially, but cleaning up a murder scene is traumatic for some.

I hope for you all to recognize how important “no to low-barrier “access to trauma recovery services is in Maine. I imagine the MRC can be a place where the following can happen.

- Law enforcement officers can refer someone who pulled over to assist a car accident and was present for a death or a bad scene.
- Crime, DV, Sexual assault and trafficking advocates can refer to the MRC if the person experiencing trauma doesn't fall under umbrella.
- The Medical Examiner's Investigators can refer to the MRC if someone is experiencing trauma.
- Attorneys that prosecute drug overdose cases can refer the family members of overdose victims to the MRC when prosecution is against the drug dealer for a drug offense, not a death.
- Therapists who recognize that their clients may benefit from the peer and community support resources that the MRC offers can refer their clients to the MRC to expand the resources for their healing journey.
- Individuals that work in the sectors of our state that experience vicarious trauma, such as dispatchers, medical professionals, SART and SANE

providers, first responders, advocates, medical examiner investigators, teachers of students who experience trauma, crisis workers and so many others that can get confidential support for themselves after helping people through horrific traumatic events daily.

I encourage you to support this bill and ensure that Mainers have support as they navigate traumatic events in their lives. Please vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1425, An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services. Show Mainers that they are important and deserve access to recovery from their trauma.

Thank you for your time.
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