

I am advocating for LD 1989 because this bill is deeply personal to me.

My name is Nicole Herling, my brother, Robert Card II, may have benefited from a Progressive Treatment Program at the time of his release from a New York hospital. I didn't know this program existed. I wish I had.

I am asking for your support of LD 1989 to fund the Progressive Treatment Program so that individuals who qualify for this level of care can access it without placing an overwhelming financial burden on their families.

When someone is living with a severe mental illness or a brain injury, families are already carrying an enormous emotional load. Many of the individuals we are discussing are transitioning from psychiatric hospitals—or even jails. This is not a routine moment in a family's life. It is crisis.

From my own experience supporting my brother during just five months of acute psychosis, I can tell you the emotional, physical, and financial toll on families is devastating. Some families pour everything they have into trying to help—time, money, energy—often at the cost of their own stability. Asking families to come up with \$3,500 while they are navigating hospitalizations, assessments, and the legal system becomes yet another barrier, and for many, an impossible one.

Treatment should not depend on a family's ability to pay during the worst moment of their lives—especially when hospitalization already requires proof of a serious threat to self or others, a standard that is difficult to meet in our state.

Maine does not have enough levels of care. People fall through the gaps—between hospital discharge and safe housing, between crisis and long-term stability. When treatment is delayed or denied, the cost shows up in repeated hospitalizations, incarceration, and unsafe communities. These outcomes are far more expensive than timely, appropriate treatment.

The Progressive Treatment Program creates accountability between providers, families, and individuals, and supports people toward stability and a better quality of life. Had I known about this program earlier, it could have made a critical difference for my brother.

We live in a state forever changed by the 2023 mass shooting. We have an obligation to get people the care they need, and to do so wisely. Programs like this are safer, more humane, and more cost-effective than long-term hospital or jail stays.

I urge you to support LD 1989. Do not place this burden on one family. Let us carry it together—before outcomes become irreversible. This is how we build safer, healthier communities. This is how we choose to be part of the solution.