

STATE OF MAINE

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"An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
LD 1425

Public Hearing Date: May 7, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Neil E. McLean Jr., and I am the District Attorney for Prosecutorial District 3, representing Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties. I am here on behalf of District 3 to testify in support of LD 1425; An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery.

As the District Attorney in Lewiston, and through our partnership with the Lewiston Police Department, other law enforcement agencies, and our community partners throughout Androscoggin County and District 3, my office was directly affected, and took on a leading role in addressing community needs in the direct aftermath of the October 25, 2023, mass shooting tragedy.

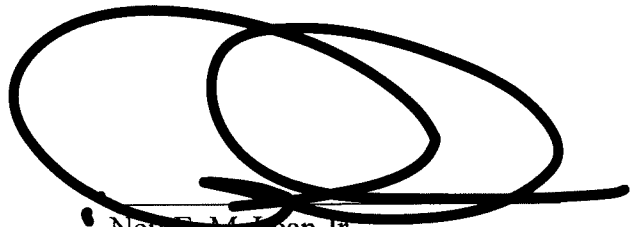
Because Lewiston and the surrounding areas in District 3 are our home, we were glad to assist in any way that we could. We immediately marshalled resources from all three counties, to include pulling Victim Witness Advocates (VWAs) from each county, and using trial assistants whose primary talents are not necessarily advocacy, however, we understood the urgency and the immediate need. Our employees rose to the challenge and I was proud to see their dedication in action. We coordinated with the Attorney General's Office, Federal Agencies, and our many community partners to assist in providing resource information, support, staffing of the Reunification Center and Family Assistance Center, reaching out to victims, victims' loved ones, and anyone directly or indirectly affected by the mass shooting. This required after hours work and weekend commitments. All of this, while still needing to meet our obligations to the courts and our many other daily responsibilities to the criminal justice system.

My office's efforts were temporary and unsustainable long term. We could not have met the needs of our community alone. What our community needed desperately was a centralized provider to deliver immediate and ongoing low-barrier trauma-informed support and resources to the hundreds of Maine people who were in need of these essential services. The Maine Resiliency Center became that centralized source and met that challenge. They continue to meet that challenge. Meeting the immediate needs, as well as the long term needs of survivors, victims, first responders, and others would not have been possible without the Resiliency Center.

Since the Resiliency Center was established, they have expanded the broad range of support they offer our community. This was a complex, novel, innovative, and evolving large scale trauma focused response. There was little by way of similar experiences to draw from; there were massive numbers of individuals requiring immediate resources and services, covering a significant geographical area. The Resiliency Center met this challenge with effectiveness, efficiency, and accomplishment. Over the last 18 months they have served more than 500 individuals who has been affected by the traumatic events of October 25, 2023. The Maine Resiliency Center continues to meet these challenges, and serve the needs of the community, however, their job is not done.

It is important to recognize that a tragedy like the one that occurred on October 25, 2023, is not defined by a single date on the calendar, or even by a short period of time surrounding the occurrence itself. It is a lifelong affliction for many. Early access to services is essential and limits the potential damaging long term effects of untreated trauma. However, it does not eliminate the long term effects of trauma. Although our community is already feeling the positive effects of the work done by the Resiliency Center, we will benefit greatly from their continued efforts. For those reasons, I am here to support LD 1425 because I believe in the mission, and I know the needs of our community. I respectfully ask that you too support LD 1425, and approve the additional funding necessary to continue their efforts of dedicating needed support, comfort, resources, and services to those impacted by the significant and far reaching trauma.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Neil B. McLean Jr.
District Attorney
District 3