

May 7, 2025

**Benjamin Dyer Testimony on LD 1425:
An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: My name is Ben Dyer and I live in Auburn, Maine. I am here to **testify in support of LD 1425, An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services**, because the Maine Resiliency Center is a blueprint for a different response to trauma to help Maine people.

On October 25, 2023, I was at Schmenge's Bar & Grille when Robert Card started shooting. I was shot. Now, when I get in front of people, they can see the physical damage done to one person by the shooting. What people don't see is the trauma.

I worked with the MRC staff to start a group for just people who survived being shot because I knew that we needed a specific group. When we talk to each other, we understand one another on a different level because we have all been injured or shot by a bullet. As a group, we learn how to manage our responses to trauma, we teach and help each other in a non-judgemental and non-stressful way. Through the MRC, we've become resources for each other.

Part of my therapy is talking about what happened. There are people in our group who don't talk to anyone else, but they go to the MRC and feel safe talking about the things happening in their lives. Our responses to our lives are different now because of the trauma we've experienced. We learn about coping strategies from Joanna and from one another. It's important to us to get the help we need where we're comfortable - and the MRC is that place.

The MRC is proof that a community-based approach to healing after trauma works. People come through its doors every day and night — for support groups, conversation, or just to feel normal again. On Sundays, I see kids playing games, just enjoying being together without having to worry about someone else's reaction to their experiences. At the MRC, they get to just be.

The MRC brings people together — through dinners, support groups, and even ASL classes to meet community needs. They build connection, advocate for us, and help us find the support we need when we don't know where to turn. When we have to fight for what we need, they are the people here to fight for us and with us.

I told Joanna, the advocate who helped me start the support group, I needed to see a therapist. I got in to see a therapist within two weeks. That is important to me. I am at the point in my life where I have to come to terms with the fact that this is what I've got, and the MRC is helping me do that in a lot of different ways.

The MRC has helped our community heal in ways unlike any other service in Maine. It's a model for something new. The staff have created a safe, welcoming place where people can begin to heal without fear or judgment. Everyone who walks through the door shares a connection — and that understanding matters, because not everyone knows what it's like to live through a mass tragedy.

I'll fight for anything I've got and I'll work twice as hard to get it. I don't take anything from anyone. And I've also learned, we need to take help when it's offered. I asked for help because I needed it and I feel like I'm in a position now to help advocate for people who need help, too.

The need for support doesn't disappear when the headlines fade. Thanks to the MRC, no Maine community will have to start from scratch in a future crisis — the blueprint already exists. Please don't let that progress stop here. Our community still needs it, and others will too.