

May 7, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1425 - An Act to Support the Sustainability of the Maine Resiliency Center

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Jim Martin. I am the CEO of Community Concepts. I am here today in strong support of LD 1425, which would fund the Maine Resiliency Center — a resource that was born out of profound tragedy, but has quickly grown into something deeply life-affirming: a place for healing, a source of strength, and a testament to what it means to come together in the face of trauma.

On October 25, 2023, Maine did not have the trauma response infrastructure to meet the scale of the need following the mass shooting that night. Six days later, I received a request from the prior Lewiston City Administrator, Heather Hunter, asking if Community Concepts would stand up and operate the resource center responsible for serving anyone impacted by that horrific event, now known as the Maine Resiliency Center. Like any Mainer asked to lend a helping hand, I said yes without hesitation. Two weeks to the day, the MRC opened its doors.

To say that we were assembling the lifeboats in the middle of the storm is an understatement. The last 18 months have brought the hardest work we've ever done — and the greatest honor of our careers. The MRC has become a lifeline for over 600 Mainers from 60 Maine communities — victims, survivors, their families, witnesses, first responders, service providers, and others impacted by the shootings.

And: we are here today because the work isn't done. Trauma doesn't end when headlines fade. Healing doesn't wrap up neatly with federal funding timelines. The MRC has created something rare: a low-barrier, community-focused model that reaches people who may otherwise not get the help they need. No red tape. No diagnosis required. Just help — when and where people need it most. Our staff meet survivors at the bowling alley, cornhole tournaments, community events, and anywhere else life goes on, because healing isn't just confined to one place. It happens in everyday moments of connection, and especially in the places where people are taking back what was taken from them.

As you know, today's funding landscape is highly unstable. It is unlikely that the resources we need will be available when we need them most. That is why it is even more critical to invest in what we've already built and what we know works. Now is the time to sustain the infrastructure that will save Maine from much greater economic, social, and human costs down the road. Waiting until the next crisis to scramble for funding to build a program like the MRC again will cost us more in dollars and our

communities. Perhaps more devastating, we also run the risk of such a resource not being an option again. We cannot afford to dismantle what works.

The MRC is presumably funded by a federal emergency grant that has yet to be awarded to the State of Maine. We have worked closely with our state and federal partners to submit all of the required documents and are just waiting for federal approval. In the meantime, the Office of the Attorney General and the City of Lewiston have provided upfront financial assistance while awaiting these funds, and, upon receipt, the grant will reimburse paid costs and allow for operations through January 2026. State funding will be used to extend and continue the current services past this date, and will allow the MRC to expand to serve individuals affected by other horrific situations across our state.

Without this funding, Maine will lose the MRC. We lose the trained staff and the trusted relationships built with adults and teens, and children throughout Maine. We lose systems that took months of urgent, determined work to build. We lose the ability to respond immediately when — not if — another crisis strikes.

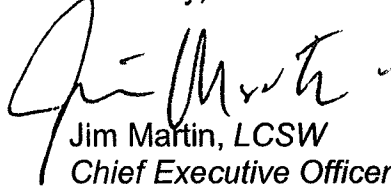
Mass violence leaves lasting scars on entire communities. Without support, those scars deepen into long-term mental health issues, workforce instability, adverse impacts on local economies, and community erosion. We know that early access to trauma support reduces healthcare costs, substance use, and lost productivity. Funding the MRC is not only the humane thing to do — it's cost-efficient and essential for Maine's future health and productivity.

The Maine Resiliency Center represents the best of who we are when we stand by those who are hurting. It is easier — and far more cost-effective — to sustain what has been built than to rebuild from scratch again when the next tragedy hits.

I urge you to support LD 1425. Let's not lose what we have built and ensure the MRC continues to be there today, tomorrow, and for whatever comes next. Thank you for your time and consideration.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have and make myself available if that would be helpful.

Sincerely,



Jim Martin, LCSW

Chief Executive Officer, Community Concepts