

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; I was part of the initial group of 4 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. And we see daily how much of an impact the MRC has had on the people that come through our doors. You will hear from many of them today, and their voice will be more impactful than mine in telling you how the MRC has had an impact. I began my career as a crime victim advocate in 2002. I'm a nationally certified victim advocate and since 2021, the grandmother to a homicide victim. I am the co-leader for the Maine Chapter of the Parents Of Murdered Children, although I am not speaking on behalf of POMC today. I am here on behalf of the MRC and Mainers who experience traumatic events.

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.

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.

- 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 Maine to recognize how important “no to low-barrier” access to trauma recovery services in. 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.
- I could go on and on – But I would surpass my 3 minutes.

I encourage you to support this bill and see that Mainers can have support as they navigate traumatic events in their lives.

Thank you for your time.

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