

May 7, 2025

**Steven Richards-Kretlow 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 Steven Richards-Kretlow and I live in Winthrop, 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 has been and continues to be an important place for so many people - particularly Deaf people.

I am an injured survivor of the mass shooting that happened on October 25, 2023. For us Deaf people, we are used to feeling behind, but the MRC has helped us catch up to hearing people. As a Deaf person, you don't always have access to the same support and resources others have because you don't have an interpreter with you 24/7.

At the MRC, there is so much help available to us: there are Deaf advocates, resources for Deaf people, interpreters, and the MRC staff are very friendly, helpful, and have really helped us all process what happened. When I'm there there's access to the help I need when I've needed it. That help is not only help for me, but also for our kids: the counseling and the support groups have all really helped with our mental health and our anxiety. The community and the help we get there has really helped us feel like we're in a better place.

Without the MRC, we would be disconnected from the community and isolated. For our kids especially, the community has been helpful. Being able to connect with the people who we didn't know before, we've come out of it with a shared experience. We went through the same thing and it's been so helpful to know other people who had similar experiences from that night.

The MRC events bring us all together because it is a space for us to get to know each other, and because of that we've become stronger together. I really feel that there's a need for this type of place for the future because this work is about caring for the community, our children, and our families. The MRC is really helping to make sure people aren't on their own - they're part of a bigger community. And through love and faith and their support, we've gotten to a place where we can find some stability.

I hope that you pass this bill and that you encourage your fellow legislators to do so as well. Thank you.