



May 7, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
Cross Office Building, Room 209
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: LD 1425, *An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier
Trauma Recovery Services*

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint
Standing Committee on Health & Human Services:

My name is Thomas Minch, and I am an advocate at Disability Rights Maine (DRM), Maine's designated Protection & Advocacy agency for individuals with disabilities. Our mission is to advance justice and equality by enforcing rights and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities in Maine.

DRM's Deaf Services division was formed in 2015, when the programs and staff of the former Maine Center on Deafness (MCD) joined the agency. This addition carried forward a 30-year legacy of history, knowledge, and advocacy for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened, or Deaf-Blind in the State of Maine.

I am here today in strong support of LD 1425. The Maine Resiliency Center (MRC), established in the wake of the mass shooting of October 25, 2023, has played a vital role in the recovery and healing of our community.

160 Capitol Street, Suite 4, Augusta, ME 04330
207.626.2774 • 1.800.452.1948 • Fax: 207.621.1419 • drme.org

MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

I work on behalf of Maine's entire Deaf Community. The tragedy of October 25th was particularly devastating for us—four members of our community lost their lives, representing 20% of the total victims. Another five Deaf individuals escaped. Many other Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals—family members and friends of the victims and survivors—were also impacted by this senseless tragedy. October 25th was our nation's first mass casualty event where multiple Deaf individuals were killed. The Center has been instrumental in helping the Deaf community come together, grieve, and support one another in a space where they feel safe and understood.

I have been deeply involved, personally and professionally, in advocating for Deaf & Hard of Hearing victims and survivors in the aftermath of this tragedy. Most recently, in September 2025, the Center began contracting with DRM to offer ASL-fluent advocacy and support services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing victims and survivors. As a result, I have seen firsthand how critical the Center's services are. The MRC provides a safe and welcoming space for those affected by a horrific tragedy, offering support groups, resources, and opportunities to gather and heal. Since its inception, demand for the Center's services has steadily increased. Individuals who were initially hesitant to seek support are now participating in events and groups, finding comfort in community connection.

For the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in particular, the Center has been a beacon of hope. The Center has prioritized communication access, ensuring ASL interpreters are present at events, meetings, support groups, and offering direct access to ASL-fluent advocacy and support through their contract with DRM. This level of accessibility has made a profound difference for our community as it works to heal.

The Maine Resiliency Center is not just for Lewiston—it is a crucial resource for the broader Maine community. The additional funding proposed in LD 1425 will ensure that this essential work continues, allowing us to meet the evolving needs of survivors, victims, and communities across the state.

I urge you to support LD 1425 and help sustain the work that is making a real difference in the lives of so many.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Thomas Minch

Thomas Minch
Advocate