

Administration

May 7, 2025

Testimony in Support of LD 1425: An Act to Improve Access to Sustainable and Low-barrier Trauma Recovery Services

Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services: I am Brian O'Malley, a Lewiston resident, the former Lewiston Police Chief, and I currently serve as Lewiston's Deputy City Administrator. I am here today to testify in support of Senator Rotundo's bill to fund trauma recovery services in the wake of the events of October 25th.

I served the people of Lewiston as a police officer for over 31 years, including five years as Chief of Police. Those of us who choose this profession train for traumatic situations and accept the emotional weight of this work. We are prepared to put our lives on the line to protect others. But nothing prepares you to respond to two mass shooting sites in one night.

That night, officers of the Lewiston Police Department responded without hesitation, as did our firefighters, public works crews, local EMS, hospital staff, and hundreds of first responders from across the state and beyond.

The trauma from those days lingers. The Maine Resiliency Center has become a vital support system, not just for the hundreds of people directly and indirectly impacted by the shooting, but for the stability of our institutions and our city.

Beyond voicing the City's full support for this bill, I want to share just how far-reaching the impact of this event has been.

The emotional toll was immediate. Lewiston was paralyzed, streets were empty, businesses closed. The lockdown stretched from Wednesday night through Friday night, creating an eerie, isolating environment very similar to the early days of the pandemic that magnified fear and anxiety.

Eighteen months later, many still struggle with PTSD, fear, and hypervigilance. I worry about all of our first responders, who saw the aftermath firsthand that night. They need structured support to process what they witnessed. Our medical professionals treated wounds more akin to battlefield trauma.

Some have found support through counseling. But much of the trauma remains unspoken and unaddressed across our staff and our city. This is why low-barrier, trauma-informed services like those provided by the MRC are not just helpful, they are essential. Recovery from trauma is not fast, and it is not linear. It requires trusted spaces and longer-term care, not just immediate crisis response.

Lewiston experienced a tragedy unlike anything we've ever known. The ripple effects continue to shape the lives of so many - in Lewiston and beyond. The MRC's services are a lifeline—not just for healing, but for resilience. I urge this committee to support this bill.

Brian O'Malley
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City of Lewiston, Maine