



Position Statement in Support of LD 1090

LD 1090: Resolve, To Equitably Fund Legal Fees for Progressive Treatment Programs

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyers, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

My name is Jeanne Gore. I'm a resident of Shapleigh, the Mom of a young man who suffers from schizoaffective disorder. I'm also the coordinator for the *National Shattering Silence Coalition* known as **NSSC**. Our mission is to speak out and inspire change for those suffering from serious brain illnesses.

I'm testifying today in support of LD 1090. From a personal perspective, I can tell you that, until my son was enrolled in the PTP Program in 2013, he suffered many years with the kind of torture none of us would ever think was possible to survive. He was hospitalized 43 times, jailed twice, went missing, became homeless and was beaten up by 7 police officers in Burlington, VT. Imaging how devastating that was for both of us.

In 2013, Dr. Josh Cole who, at the time was practicing with York Psychiatric Associates, agreed to apply for the PTP Program for my son. Once enrolled in the program, the revolving door in and out of hospitals, jail, and homelessness finally ended for him. All those years we were unable to get successful treatment, however, killed brain cells, making my son unable to achieve his maximum ability to become a contributing member of society and, more importantly, achieve his dream to become a recognized musician and artist. He and I both now suffer from PTSD, anxiety, etc... in addition to his schizoaffective disorder and anosognosia.

The pandemic has forced us all to see just how broken our system of care is for those suffering from these devastating illnesses is. A large percentage of our homeless and drug addicted population consists of people with serious brain illnesses, otherwise known as serious mental illnesses. And, that number is climbing.

Making the PTP Program accessible to as many people as possible would save lives, taxpayers money, drastically reduce incarceration rates, and increase the number of hospital beds available to treat psychiatric illnesses. My son is proof of this. He now lives independently with his dog and hasn't been hospitalized for many years.

The PTP Program, known in other states as AOT or Assisted Outpatient Treatment, and grossly underutilized in Maine, is evidence-based, compassionate treatment. We owe it to those who are suffering from these illnesses to provide the earliest possible intervention BEFORE a crisis happens, BEFORE they begin to self-medicate and become addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, and BEFORE more brain cells are destroyed which is what happens each time a person is allowed to become psychotic.

I hope you will do what is fiscally responsible and will save lives and pass this bill.

Thank you,
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