

May 3, 2021

Testimony of Peter Mills
Before the 130th Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
To support LD 1090

Resolve, To Equitably Fund Legal Fees for Progressive Treatment Programs

Chairman Claxton, Representative Meyer, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services:

My name is Peter Mills, a former member of your committee and a co-author of the Progressive Treatment law along with Senator John Nutting. He was ever the consummate spokesman and the able vote getter, while I was his scrivener and analyst.

We hear a lot of heated rhetoric lately responding to "DEFUND the POLICE," an unfortunate slogan that means either more or less than what one wants it to mean and does very little to advance the cause of reducing violence in civil society.

Regardless of how anyone responds to the rhetoric, there is one thing upon which everyone may agree: The Progressive Treatment Program reduces violence, saves lives, relieves family trauma, and frees many people afflicted with mental illness from losing their liberty and from having to be confined in jail, hospitals, or mental institutions.

It has been highly successful in Maine and in many other states. It is endorsed by medical practitioners, by families, by law enforcement, and by judges. Our sheriffs are appalled that their jails are, by default, the largest mental institutions in each region of our state. They feel powerless to help. They are well aware that a Progressive Treatment Program administered by an ACT team provides a far superior solution for many troubled individuals.

While there may be a few extreme civil libertarians who feel that a person with anosognosia (lack of awareness) has a right to persist in a mentally ill state without imposed conditions, our society and the friends, family and medical care givers for the mentally ill, and many who have recovered from illness know better from their own personal experience. In fact, the Progressive Treatment Program is a way to ensure that a person with mental illness may retain freedom with reduced danger of harm to oneself or others.

Because each Progressive Treatment Plan is subject to court enforcement, the system cannot function if those administering the program are denied access to legal help. Providing such assistance is a small price to pay for reducing violence in our society, for relieving law enforcement from jobs they are not trained for, and for providing many of our mentally ill citizens with the personal freedom that they so richly deserve.

Thank you.

Peter Mills 207 858 6400 cell

pmills@mainelegal.net

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