

Laura Snyder  
BATH

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

I am writing to you in support of LD 1090. My name is Laura Snyder, and I live in Bath, Maine. I am writing as the aunt of a young man with schizophrenia and anosognosia and as a retired occupational therapist who worked with people with brain injury. Over the past 20 years, my caseload included many people with a mental illness diagnosis in addition to brain injury. This included at least five people with mental illness who committed suicide and one who was convicted of homicide.

My nephew was diagnosed with schizophrenia thirteen years ago. Since this time, he has been unable to connect the effect of going off his medication with resultant unsafe behaviors or to associate his diagnosis with his actions. When not on medication, my nephew has experienced homelessness and extreme paranoia. He has been the perpetrator of violence and has been incarcerated three times. When he has been mandated to participate in the PTP program on medication, he has been able to live with support in an apartment, hold a job, play in a band, and take college classes. While accessing PTP services, he has never had a violent episode.

And he is not alone. People with mental illness diagnosis have filled homeless shelters and jails. While working at a brain injury treatment facility, I was disheartened to see many people suffering from mental illness try to qualify for our programs, as they were living marginally in communities and had nowhere else to turn.

Increasing accessibility to the PTP program is a cost efficient way to save and improve lives. It would reduce the harmful, often cruel practice of incarcerating people who are mentally ill. It would also increase free up hospital beds for people who need them. While my nephew was in the PTP program, he never required hospitalization. The PTP program provides proven optimal treatment in the least restrictive setting.

The PTP program is cost-effective and humane. It offers alternatives to people who would otherwise be placing themselves and sometimes others at risk. Please pass this bill to expand its availability. Thank you.