

Dear Governor Cox,

My name is Natasha Castor, and I'm a lifelong Utah resident, mother, and small business owner. I'm writing to you today as a sister who loves her brother deeply — and as a woman who believes Utah can lead the nation in compassion and mental health reform.

My younger brother, Joshua, has been in and out of prison for most of his life, not because he's dangerous, but because he lives with untreated mental illness. Each time he's released, the system fails him. There's no stable care, no long-term therapy, and no safe place where he can learn to function independently. Eventually, he falls through the cracks and ends up back behind bars.

Joshua doesn't need more incarceration — he needs healing.

And he's not alone. Thousands of Utahns are trapped in the same cycle of relapse, homelessness, and arrest because there's no structured middle ground between emergency care and independence.

We have only one main psychiatric hospital — Utah State Hospital in Provo — with roughly 350 beds for over 3.5 million residents. Our Crisis Receiving Centers do critical short-term stabilization, but there is still no safe, long-term environment for people to rebuild their lives after crisis.

That's where so many people, including my brother, get lost.

Utah has hospitals in nearly every major city, yet only one is dedicated to long-term psychiatric treatment. As many medical facilities as we have for physical pain, we should also have spaces for mental pain — for the sick, the lost, and the suffering who cannot heal with medication alone.

We need hospitals of the heart and mind — facilities that treat invisible illness with the same urgency and dignity we give to physical wounds. Because mental illness is an injury — it just bleeds differently.

Until we create as many centers for mental healing as we have for physical care, we will continue to see people like my brother, and thousands of others, fall through the cracks.

The Vision — A Sanctuary for the Human Spirit

I believe Utah could become the example the rest of the country follows.

Imagine a Healing Village — a structured, compassionate community that bridges the gap between treatment and real life. A place where people can recover in dignity, surrounded by nature and purpose, not confinement.

There would be:

- Private rooms, not cells, with light, gardens, and peace.
- Life-retraining programs to help residents learn daily skills and communication.
- Trauma-informed therapy, medication management, and holistic care.
- Spiritual and grounding practices — yoga, mindfulness, and energy alignment for those open to it.
- Transitional housing and reentry mentorship for long-term success.

This is not a hospital. It's a sanctuary — a place that restores humanity and teaches self-trust again.

Why This Matters — Prevention Before Tragedy

The recent Charlie Kirk assassination attempt here in Utah was a painful reminder that untreated mental illness can lead to unpredictable and tragic outcomes. Acts of violence and despair often begin as untreated suffering.

If people had safe places to go before they broke — spaces that welcomed them without judgment — lives could be saved, and futures could be rewritten.

A Vision for Now and for Our Future

This is not only about today's crisis — it's about protecting future generations.

While my focus is on helping adults like my brother Joshua — those already living with the consequences of untreated illness — I can't help but think of the generations growing up behind us.

The world our youth are inheriting is increasingly disconnected. Technology, social pressure, and isolation are quietly shaping mental-health challenges we've never seen at this scale. We're witnessing rising rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability among young people who have grown up online but not always connected to themselves.

This only reinforces why Safe Healing Spaces are so vital — not only for those already struggling, but for what we are teaching our children about how we care for one another.

If we build systems rooted in empathy and prevention now, our youth will one day inherit a Utah where healing is possible before harm is done.

We cannot predict what long-term impact this will have — but we can prepare.

By investing in mental wellness now — through Safe Healing Spaces and community education — we safeguard not only those who are struggling today, but the minds and hearts of the next generation who will inherit this state.

When our children see that Utah chooses healing over punishment, they'll know this is a state where every life matters and where it's safe to ask for help.

Real Programs to Build Upon

Utah already has a foundation to make this vision real:

- Housing First (Salt Lake City) once reduced chronic homelessness by 90%. A mental health version could do the same for our justice-involved population.
- Fortitude Treatment Center (Salt Lake County) proves reentry programs work — imagine a version centered around psychiatric stability instead of parole supervision. This shows reentry programs can stabilize lives — we can adapt this for mental health.
- Crisis Receiving Centers could expand into longer-term therapeutic housing for post-incarceration or high-need individuals, offering care and stability at any time they need it.
- Peer-led programs in Oregon and Washington show that small recovery communities drastically reduce readmission and relapse.

Utah already has the foundation. These models work — they just need Utah's leadership to bring them together under one unified mission. We desperately need the courage and compassion to expand it.

The Request

Governor Cox, I'm asking if there's any possibility to begin a public-private funding initiative or pilot program for a Safe Healing Space here in Utah — even one to start.

I would gladly volunteer, advocate, and help organize support. This is deeply personal to me, but it's also about the future of our children and the moral fabric of our state.

Utah has always been a place of faith, family, and heart.

This could be our next great act of love — building a state where no one is left unseen, and where healing is not a privilege, but a human right.

With respect and gratitude,

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Petition to link below

<https://c.org/TDgJqcqjgT>