

**STATE OF MAINE**

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**IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD**

**TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX**

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**JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 2026 AS TEEN  
DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH**

**WHEREAS**, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, teen dating violence includes 4 types of behavior: physical violence, sexual violence, psychological aggression and stalking; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the National Institute of Justice, technology-facilitated abuse is a growing social malady contributing to increased psychological aggression among teens; and

**WHEREAS**, technology-facilitated abuse includes, but is not limited to, cyber extortion, cyberstalking and doxing; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Cyberbullying Research Center, over 1/4 of teens who had been in a romantic relationship at some point in the previous year said they had been the victim of at least one form of digital dating abuse; and

**WHEREAS**, while dating violence, domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking affect individuals regardless of age, teens are especially vulnerable; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, almost half of teens experienced at least one type of violence, and one in 7 teens experienced at least 2 types of violence; and

**WHEREAS**, one in 9 female and one in 36 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year; and

**WHEREAS**, the CDC reported that nearly one in 11 female teens and about one in 15 male teens reported experiencing physical dating violence in the last year; and

**WHEREAS**, teaching teens about the consequences of intimate partner violence and supporting the development of healthy, respectful and nonviolent relationships have the potential to decrease teen dating violence in future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, educating middle school students and their parents about the importance of building healthy relationships and preventing teen dating violence is key to deterring abuse before it begins; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey of the CDC, 80% of female rape victims experienced their first rape before 25 years of age and almost half experienced their first rape before 18 years of age; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the same National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 26% of women and 15% of men who were victims of sexual violence, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before 18 years of age; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately 35% of women who were raped as minors were also raped as adults; and

**WHEREAS**, developing healthy relationship practices and standards in youth under 18 years of age can be critical to eliminating sexual violence and other forms of intimate partner violence; and

**WHEREAS**, teen dating violence is a preventable public health crisis that can negatively impact teens and youth, and teens who have experienced dating violence are more than twice as likely as others to consider suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, the CDC indicates that there are several community factors, including poverty, lack of institutions, relationships and norms that shape a community's social interactions, poor neighborhood support and cohesion, weak community sanctions against intimate partner violence and high alcohol outlet density, that place individuals at greater risk for perpetrating intimate partner violence; and

**WHEREAS**, the CDC also indicates that community factors, such as neighborhood collective efficacy and coordination of resources and services among community agencies, may reduce an individual's risk of perpetrating intimate partner violence; and

**WHEREAS**, primary prevention programs are a key part of addressing teen dating violence, and many successful examples of such programs include education, community outreach and social marketing campaigns that are culturally appropriate; and

**WHEREAS**, evidence-based programs such as the Coaching Boys Into Men program have demonstrated that teaching adolescent men how to have healthy and nonviolent relationships may increase positive bystander behavior and prevent adolescent men from becoming perpetrators of teen dating violence; and

**WHEREAS**, the federal Violence Against Women Act of 1994, as amended by the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, includes the SMART Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Act, which improves the coordination and effectiveness of programs to address abusive youth relationships; and

**WHEREAS**, skilled assessment and intervention programs are necessary for youth victims and abusers; and

**WHEREAS**, the designation of the month of February 2026 as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month will benefit schools, communities and families regardless of socioeconomic status, race and sex; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED:** We, the Members of the One Hundred and Thirty-second Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this occasion to:

1. Designate February 2026 as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month;
2. Express our support for communities in empowering teens to develop healthy relationships throughout their lives;
3. Recognize the impact of teen dating violence on public health and its specific and disproportionate impact on young women; and
4. Call on the people of the State, including youth, parents, schools, law enforcement, state and local officials, nonprofit organizations and interested groups to observe Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month with appropriate programs and activities that promote awareness and prevention of teen dating violence.