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Resolve, To Prevent Domestic Violence and Protect Our Citizens

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the effects of deadly domestic violence and its impact on the State's public health system and social services system are far-reaching; and

Whereas, it is imperative that the State explore adoption of a comprehensive strategy and network to address the many challenges surrounding domestic violence and protecting the State's citizens and communities; and

Whereas, as a part of this comprehensive policy, it is imperative that the State reach out to all persons affected by domestic violence, whether a victim, a family member or friend, community members, community organizations, victim services groups or law enforcement in order to gather the necessary information to ascertain what programs are working and what additional programs are needed to reach our underserved populations; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 Review of supports and protections. Resolved: That the Department of Public Safety shall undertake a comprehensive review of the measures currently in place to support and protect victims and potential victims of domestic violence. In undertaking this review, the department shall consider:

1. The ability of domestic violence advocacy offices in this State to provide sufficient support, referrals, resources and protection for domestic violence victims given current levels of funding;
2. The establishment of a program to gather input and comments from victims and their families, community members, law enforcement and organizations that provide services to domestic violence victims in order to determine which programs are working effectively, how to better reach underserved populations and concerned community members and what programs are missing or insufficiently funded;
3. The feasibility of providing increased funding from outside sources for safe houses and crisis assistance for victims and their families;
4. The feasibility of providing increased funding from outside sources for free and more accessible counseling and support services for victims; and
5. The feasibility of providing increased interventions to the victims, their families and communities concerning domestic violence and how to find and access services; and be it further

Sec. 2 Review domestic violence laws. Resolved: That the Department of Public Safety shall endeavor to review the effectiveness of the provisions of the Maine Criminal Code related to domestic violence; and be it further

Sec. 3 Funding. Resolved: That the Department of Public Safety shall endeavor to secure outside funding and resources, including but not limited to the use of grants and interns, to undertake the review under sections 1 and 2 and shall limit its work to that which can be accomplished from sources other than appropriations from the General Fund or Highway Fund; and be it further

Sec. 4 Report. Resolved: That the Department of Public Safety shall submit a report of its findings, including any necessary implementing legislation, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters no later than December 10, 2008. After receipt and review of the report, the joint standing committee may submit legislation based on the report to the First Regular Session of the 124th Legislature.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved, except as otherwise indicated.