

Testimony of Polly Campbell on Behalf of the Elder Abuse Institute of Maine

To Joint Standing Committee On Appropriations and Financial Affairs

In favor of LD 258: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government

Greetings Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Polly Campbell, RN, BS, BA and I am the Clinical Director for the Advanced Nursing Education - Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (ANE-SANE) Program at the School of Nursing and Population Health at the University of New England, a Board member of the Elder Abuse Institute of Maine, a member of the Maine Council on Elder Abuse Prevention. I am testifying today in support of the proposed appropriation for Elder Justice Investments in LD 258, which includes support for the Elder Service Connections program, civil legal services for older adults, and expanded capacity of Adult Protective Services (APS) to investigate the growing number of reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation here in Maine. Services provided by these programs were included as recommendations in the Elder Justice Roadmap, which was developed by a unique public-private partnership at the Governor's request. Our agency participated in the development of this roadmap.

The Elder Abuse Institute of Maine was founded in 2003. We are a statewide private nonprofit organization serving older Mainers at risk for or experiencing abuse in communities across our state. We provide confidential safe housing for older victims through our Martha's Cottage program, and community-based services for clients referred to us by Adult Protective Services, through the Elder Service Connections program.

Elder Service Connections is based on the nationally recognized RISE (Repair harm, Inspire change, Support connection, Empower choice) model which was piloted here in Maine in 2019. To date, our Advocates, located in communities across the state, have served over 400 older Mainers. Results of our findings have been written up national journals and replication of the

program is being sought after by other communities across the country due to the successful outcomes experienced here in Maine. Our data shows that in addition to being satisfied with the services they receive, clients involved in our program are significantly less likely than their counterparts to return to the APS system, saving money over the long term.

Our clients are our neighbors, although for many of us, their struggles are invisible. They are often socially isolated and lack a robust support network; their dependency on others for support, therefore, can leave them vulnerable to exploitation. The challenges our clients face, including housing instability, financial and food insecurity, access to long-term care services, and legal services, are often exacerbated by their physical and emotional safety needs. Our Advocates work one-on-one with clients, assisting them in addressing their needs, and ensuring that their voices and choices are central to our interventions.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for the Governor's inclusion of much needed support for elder justice interventions in the biennial budget.