



March 6th, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Kathleen Paradis, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center.

I am submitting testimony in support of LD 566, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services.

I have worked as a Prevention Educator and Advocate for 14 years and have seen firsthand the cultural change among young people around Sexual Violence. When I first began this work, I heard daily comments saturated with myths, victim-blaming, and a complete lack of understanding of consent.

Among elementary students, I've received many disclosures about sexual abuse happening. For some children, our Personal Body Safety lesson is the first time they've heard that touches in private areas shouldn't be a secret and other "safety rules" like speaking to a trusted adult.

And for Parents, we help them understand how to increase protective factors within their child.

Over the years, I've been torn about whether I can continue doing the work I love so much. It's been challenging to stay afloat with a kid in college, and the cost of everything skyrocketing. I've tried to work some jobs on the side, but working full-time and raising children doesn't leave much time.

What has always kept me doing this work is seeing that prevention can reduce Sexual Violence and make our communities safer. However, it continues to be a stressful challenge for me to meet all of my financial obligations. Passing LD 566 would mean me continuing the meaningful work I love.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration and please support LD 566, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services!

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