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Testimony of Rep. Nina Milliken supporting
LD 566, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and fellow members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Nina Milliken and I have the good fortune to represent House District 16 which consists of the fine people of the towns of Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Sedgwick, Surry, and Trenton and I write in support of LD 566 that is before the Committee's consideration.

In the early 1980s, Professor Mary Koss of University of Arizona, did a massive study of women in American Universities and Colleges to find out how many of them had suffered from an act or acts of sexual violence. It was the largest study of its kind that had been done at that point. Her findings were published in a 1984 edition of MS MAGAZINE and the public was shocked at that time to learn that 25% of women (that's one in four) had experienced a rape or attempted rape while they were in college. A quarter.

I'd love to be standing here today to tell you that with a lot of hard work and self-reflection, we have been able to improve on these statistics, but alas, we have done virtually nothing to improve this statistic and it remains unchanged in the nearly 40 years that have passed since Koss finished her piece for the magazine. Today, 15% of Maine girls reports being a victim of a rape of attempted rape by the time they finish high school.¹ Since 1984, we have added to our knowledge that one in six boys will also suffer from a rape or attempted rape by the time that they transition into adulthood.²

We as a culture and society fail victims of sexual violence at every single turn. We fail them over and over and over again, and we have for generations. The criminal system as a means of obtaining justice for victims fails them, too. 2.5% of reports to police end up in a conviction and

¹State of Maine, (2021). 2021 MIYHS High School Report. Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. Pg. 8. Retrieved from https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2021_Reports/Core_Reports/HS/MIYHS2021_Core_Reports_HS_State/Maine_2021_MIYHS_High_School_Report.pdf

² 1 in 6.org (n.d). Researchers have found that at least 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual abuse or assault, whether in childhood or as adults. S. Retrieved from <https://1in6.org/statistic/>

incarceration.³ If you look at sentencing examples for these crimes across the state, they often are counted in weeks or months, not in years. Some of you may remember the conviction of a young man named Brock Turner, a star swimmer at Stanford University in California. He was sentenced to a measly 6 months in jail following a conviction of rape. People were beside themselves about the short sentence. I remember thinking that it was a pretty impressive outcome; very rarely do victims get this outcome, and even less so when their perpetrator is a privileged, white man.

Imagine, if you will, going through the enormous emotional hardship of trying for a criminal conviction. Women literally open their bodies for forensic exams, vaginal swabs, pubic combs, interview after interview after interview with police, doctors, nurses, and prosecutors. Then they wait, often for years, for their case to come up, often bumping into the man or men that raped them in the grocery store, at the school, and at the pub. Very few cases ever see the inside a courtroom, but if the victim is extremely lucky, they then go to court where they are called to testify and then cross examined by your perpetrators attorney in front of the man who raped them. They'll answer humiliating and demeaning questions. If this all is fortunate enough to result in a conviction (again, very rare), imagine the heartbreak that would be felt by that victim when their offender is handed a sentence of just a few months. And, as I stated before, this would be a VERY lucky outcome.

The one place that we do not fail victims is here in this room. These folks show up. They show up in hospitals, in police interviews, in counseling appointments, in courtrooms, in living rooms, and often just on the other end of a middle of the night phone call. I can tell you as a victim of various acts of sexual violence that the trauma suffered by the victims is not only experienced between the hours of 9 and 5, Monday to Friday. It rears its damned head at 2am on Christmas Eve, over barbeques for Memorial Days and the Fourth of July, any time of any day. It's inconvenient, and it's devastating. It often renders victims immobile. To put it bluntly, it sucks.

These women answer those calls. They suffer from vicarious trauma. They lose sleep. They lose time with their families. They take their work home with them. They help victims carry the heavy load of their traumas. It's a huge burden and they bear it every single day.

We owe it to these underappreciated, heroic Mainers to pay them better than we do, better than they would make slinging pizza and your neighborhood joint. We owe it to victims and survivors of sexual violence to ensure that these women and men continue to answer their calls and show up for them. It's been 40 years since we learned how widespread these crimes are. We have done so little to help in that time. Here is a place where you can help. Please do so by supporting the passage of LD566. Thank you for your time and consideration.

³ RAINN (n.d). The Criminal Justice System: Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>