

MEMORANDUM

To: The Legislature of the State of Maine

From: John Bellocchio, Renew Our Church

Distinguished Members of the Legislature:

I thank you for taking the time to read the stories of survival from those who were sexually assaulted as children, myself included. I ask you to consider the abject horror of the attached stories, and moreover, the long-term and irreversible damage child sexual assault had on every victim, and will have on every future victim. Members of the Legislature, while there is help available, no one will ever fully recover from the damage inflicted by child sexual assault. The imprint lasts, ultimately, until death. It is imperative that the State of Maine abolish, permanently, the statute of limitations for all those who have committed acts of child sexual abuse in the State of Maine. **It is time for the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse to end, right now.**

For decades, going back to the 1970s, Maine has been used as a dumping ground of sorts for pedophile clergy from throughout the nation, especially from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, as explained so clearly in the film "Spotlight." The Church was counting on two things to keep the matter quiet: the religious nature of the people in Maine, and the influence of Acadian Catholic culture in the Downeast part of the State to stabilize the silence. Their bet paid off, and for so many children, the price to pay was terrible. As you will hear in my testimony and what you will see in the written documentation made available to the committee, recidivism is constant. The question is not whether an abuser will reoffend,

but when and how - will they get more violent? Will they kill a victim? The safest place for those who sexually assault children is within the walls of a prison, of that, there is no question.

Maine's legendary woodlands have created the ideal spot for wanted criminals who have committed this heinous act to hide and live off the grid - in fact, they have done just that. It is time for Maine to lead the way, and it is time for the Legislature to act and send the important message: **there is no quarter for those who have committed child sexual assault in the State of Maine.** It is incumbent upon the Legislature to pass this bill without delay, protect children, and hold predators responsible. I am glad to be able to work with you on this vital matter, and thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



DATED:

May 2, 2023

one in five

Is sexual assault a problem in Maine?



Yes. One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.

[1] Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.

[2] However, in 2019, only 514

rapes or attempted rapes were

reported to Maine law

enforcement. [3]

Sexual Assault Helpline:
1-800-871-7741
free | private | 24/7

EXIT SITE NOW

More Maine Statistics

HOME GET HELP OUR WORK STATS DONATE

CONTACT EN ESPAÑOL

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

+

ADULTS

+

MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE USE

+

National Statistics

GENERAL

+

REPORTING & PROSECUTION

+

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

+

HEALTH IMPACTS

+

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

+

Citations

CITATIONS 1-17

CITATIONS 18-49

CITATIONS 50-60

HOME	GET HELP	OUR WORK	STATS	DONATE	+
CONTACT	EN ESPAÑOL				+
					+



MaineShare
THIRTY YEARS OF GIVING 1988-2018



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

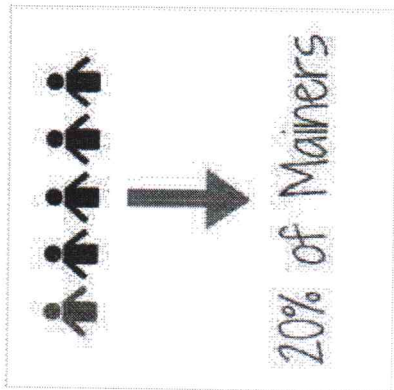
The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault is funded in part by the Maine Department of Health & Human Services, MaineShare, the Bingham Foundation, and the generous support of your public and private donations.

Call **1-800-871-7741** to talk to someone who can help. Free, private support is available 24/7.

MECASA represents and supports Maine's sexual assault support centers.

one in five

Is sexual assault a problem in Maine?



Yes. One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.
[1] Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.
[2] However, in 2019, only 514 rapes or attempted rapes were reported to Maine law

enforcement. [3]

Sexual Assault Helpline:
1-800-871-7741
free | private | 24/7

EXIT SITE NOW

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

In a study of girls who were committed and/or detained at Maine's Long Creek Youth Development Center between December 2001 and September 2002, 20% of the girls reported a history of sexual abuse or rape. [4]

In 2019, approximately 50% of calls to Maine's sexual assault crisis and support line related to child sexual abuse. [5]

According to the Children's Safety Network and Data Analysis Resource Center, the comprehensive costs of sexual abuse of children in Maine in 2004 were \$138,057,000. This estimate takes into consideration future earnings, medical and mental health expenses, and public programs, among other things. [6]

Approximately 7.5% of Maine high school students (10.8% of girls and 4.0% of boys) report that they have been physically forced to have sexual intercourse. 11.9% – 18.4% of girls and 5.6% of boys – report having been forced to have sexual contact in any way in their lifetime. [7]

18.4% of Maine high school students – 26.4% of girls and 10.6% of boys – report having been the target of offensive sexual comments at school or on the way to or from school in their lifetime. [8]

In FY 2018 and FY2019 combined, Maine's sexual assault crisis and support centers provided prevention education sessions to almost 70,000 Maine K-12 students. [9]

[HOME](#)

[GET HELP](#)

[OUR WORK](#)

[STATS](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[EN ESPAÑOL](#)

[DONATE](#)

National Statistics

GENERAL

+

REPORTING & PROSECUTION

+

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

+

HEALTH IMPACTS

+

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

+

Citations

CITATIONS 1-17

+

CITATIONS 18-49

+

[DONATE](#)[STATS](#)[OUR WORK](#)[GET HELP](#)[HOME](#)[EN ESPAÑOL](#)[CONTACT](#)

MaineShare
THIRTY YEARS OF GIVING - 1990-2020



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

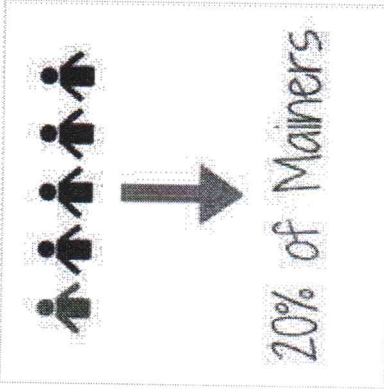
The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault is funded in part by the Maine Department of Health & Human Services, MaineShare, the Bingham Foundation, and the generous support of your public and private donations.

Call 1-800-871-7741 to talk to someone who can help. Free, private support is available 24/7.

MECASA represents and supports Maine's sexual assault support centers.

one in five

Is sexual assault a problem in Maine?



Yes. One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.

[1] Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.

[2] However, in 2019, only 514 rapes or attempted rapes were reported to Maine law

enforcement. [3]

Sexual Assault Helpline:
1-800-871-7741
free | private | 24/7

EXIT SITE NOW

DONATE

STATS

OUR WORK

GET HELP

HOME

EN ESPAÑOL

CONTACT

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

ADULTS

A recent study found that nearly one in five adult Maine residents reports that they have been the victim of rape or attempted rape during their lifetime; 35.7% of female respondents and 10.1% of male respondents have experienced this devastating crime at some point in their lives. [10]

Roughly 14,000 Maine residents may be the victim of rape or unwanted sexual activity during any 12 month period. [11]

In 2019, about 20% of callers to Maine's sexual assault crisis and support line were men. [12]

Preble Street Resource Center, located in Portland, Maine, reports that 44% of women interviewed for their report **Women and Homelessness** reported being a victim of sexual assault since becoming homeless. [13]

MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE USE

National Statistics

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

HEALTH IMPACTS

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Citations

CITATIONS 1-17

CITATIONS 18-49

CITATIONS 50-60

+ + + + + +



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

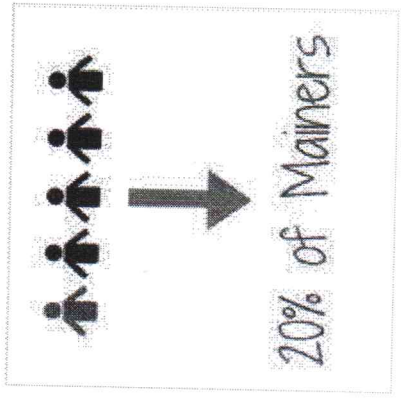
Foundation, and the generous support of your public and private donations.

Call 1-800-871-7741 to talk to someone who can help. Free, private support is available 24/7.

MECASA represents and supports Maine's sexual assault support centers.

one in five

Is sexual assault a problem in Maine?



Yes. One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.

[1] Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.

[2] However, in 2019, only 514 rapes or attempted rapes were reported to Maine law

enforcement. [3]

Sexual Assault Helpline:
1-800-871-7741
free | private | 24/7

EXIT SITE NOW

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

ADULTS

MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE USE

48.6% of adult Maine sexual assault survivors report that they have ever been diagnosed as depressed, as opposed to 17.5% individuals who have never been sexually assaulted. [14]

38.3% of adult Maine sexual assault survivors report that they have ever been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, as opposed to 14.2% of individuals who have never been sexually assaulted. [15]

28.7% of women sexual assault survivors in Maine report they drank heavily in the past month (compared to 4.4% of individuals who have never been sexually assaulted). [16]

Of Maine youth who experience forced sexual contact OR forced sex, 35-37% consider suicide, as compared with only 9-10% of their peers who have not experienced sexual violence. [17]

National Statistics

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

HEALTH IMPACTS

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Citations

CITATIONS 1-17

CITATIONS 18-49

CITATIONS 50-60

+

+

+

+

+

+



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

Foundation, and the generous support of your public and private donations.

Call 1-800-871-7741 to talk to someone who can help. Free, private support is available 24/7.

MECASA represents and supports Maine's sexual assault support centers.

More sexual abuse survivors come forward against Maine Catholic Diocese

2-2 minutes : 3/8/2023

PORTLAND, Maine (WMTW) - More sexual abuse survivors are suing the Maine Catholic Diocese.

A civil complaint details claims from six additional victims of abuse allegedly committed by Father Lawrence Sabatino from 1958 to 1967. Sabatino died in 1990.

The survivors join Ann Allen, who was the first to file a suit against Sabatino in December.

These lawsuits now total 20 against the Diocese by law firm Berman and Simmons.

They say the Diocese failed to warn parishioners and their families about the sexual abuse allegations against the priest.

Survivors speaking out now to ensure it doesn't happen again.

"I never thought this affected my life, but it affected everything in my life. I'm 70 years old and I'm finally realizing and putting the pieces together," said Patricia Butkowski.

"It's so great to be with all of these brave women because I don't feel alone anymore, and I hope they don't either," Ann Allen said.

The statute of limitations on older abuse cases in Maine was lifted in 2021.

Berman and Simmons said, prior to that ruling, these survivors had no legal path to hold the church and clergy accountable or to seek justice.

They say the diocese is appealing to the supreme court on the decision to lift the statute of limitations.

We reached out to the diocese for comment but had no response.

If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual assault, you can reach the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault online at mecasa.org or you can call 1-800-871-7741.

Copyright 2023 WMTW. All rights reserved.

