

January 23, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Poppy Hiser and I am submitting testimony on behalf of SARSSM (Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine).

I am submitting testimony in support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes.

As a Registered Nurse who holds my Masters in Public Health, the work I engage in support of survivors, especially in terms of their long term recovery and success, is directly tied to the funding we receive as an agency.

Recently, I accompanied a young victim to a hospital accompaniment who had no family or friends in the area. She stated she did not want a forensic exam until an advocate arrived on site. Without the presence of an advocate to help understand a complex system, while also dealing with the physical and emotional trauma of the assault, this victim would have navigated what can be a very overwhelming system, alone.

It's cases like the above that illustrate the importance of our responsive work and the potency of our care. Without funding for such services, victims are less likely to seek the justice they deserve after experiencing violent crimes and are also less likely to access the care they need to heal from what can be the debilitating impacts on their ability to live a full and thriving life.

I align my work closely with the evidence-based practices of the Centers for Disease Control, as my organization's Lead Preventionist. The CDC's proven view that prevention and education intervention can prevent violent crimes before they occur drives development and implementation of my team's work.

Sexual violence is a huge public health problem here in Maine with approximately 19,000 incidents occurring yearly. Violent incidents can be prevented when approaches and strategies align with adequate funding of the agencies that so willingly serve the victims of our state.

Thank you greatly for your consideration of this bill. It is necessary for the survival of these important interventions, prevention work, and individuals.

Sincerely,  
Poppy Hiser RN/MPH