

January 18, 2024

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

I am submitting this letter out of serious concern about the proposed funding cut for VOCA at a level of over 60% which will have devastating consequences.

My name is Christine Y. Brown. I am a licensed clinical social worker and have practiced in the field for many years and in different settings, including internationally. I reside in Caribou, ME and am currently employed in a very large behavioral health agency.

My extensive experience, as well as the agency's behavioral health services to individuals whom many have a serious trauma history, as well as the our agency's own Sexual Assault service to victims, I feel I am well-placed to provide testimony in support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crime.

As aforementioned, many individuals who seek mental health and substance use services are victims of trauma from some type of abuse through domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Over the years, I have had direct involvement in domestic violence and sexual assault cases.

A major part of clinical service is to ensure that the individual is linked to the needed resources in view of taking action instead of remaining silent. While each individual's situation is unique to them, I have been a witness to the personal empowerment that develops for victims through the help of advocacy services that assist them to seek justice and reclaim their sense of dignity and self-worth. This is crucial at any age, but most of for all young victims who are our future generation of adults.

Therefore, it is paramount that services that focus on prevention and direct support and intervention to victims continue to be fully funded so that victims have access to the domestic violence, sexual assault services legal resources such as PTLA lawyers as well as the prevention education offered throughout schools and other venues for prevention and advocacy awareness.

In closing, I wish to express my deep appreciation to you, the Committee members, for your attention and consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Y. Brown, LCSW, CCS