

January 18, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Sarah Krajewski, and I am submitting testimony in support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes. I'm a resident of Bath and an advocate at Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM) in Brunswick. In my role with SASSMM, I am well acquainted with our community partners - I am a resource for law enforcement, corrections professionals, school personnel, and community members. I am also, more importantly, a safe place for survivors. I hold stories, validate emotions without judgement, offer options, and provide a confidential and compassionate ear during their hardest times.

I listen, I support and I believe.

I work with survivors on their worst days: in hospitals, police stations, courts, prisons and jails. I celebrate them and their wins and I sit with them in their despair. I am "in it" with them, day in, day out, sometimes sacrificing time with my family to support folks, and I do it all because I believe in the work, because victims deserve to be supported. I am not alone in any of this, it's what we all do as advocates supporting survivors.

In this work we are already spread too thin. Even when we are fully staffed there aren't enough of us for the need out there. If we do not get this funding, our agencies will be forced to make tough choices on what and who to cut, which translates into who gets our services and how much presence we have in police stations, schools, jails, courtrooms, and hospitals.

People with incredible knowledge, training, and experience, who are willing to walk into spaces and situations that most retreat from, are going to lose their jobs, taking that knowledge and willingness with them, leaving survivors on their own to navigate these complicated systems and emotions. I urge you to support LD 2084, so we can continue to support Maine's most vulnerable citizens and every survivor who needs us.

Thank you.