

January 23, 2024

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

My name is Stephen Nason, and I am the Rural Advocate for sexual assault services for Aroostook, Hancock and Washington Counties.

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

I am a new advocate, who had previously worked in higher education for the past 28 years. As a higher education professional, serving as a Title IX coordinator and Investigator, I was very aware of the need of support for survivors of sexual assault. However, my training as an advocate opened my eyes to how vast that need is. Survivors face so many barriers to finding healing and justice, and they need advocates who can affirm, believe, and provide confidential support. As an advocate, by being empathic, respectful, showing warmth and being transparent, I help the survivor become re-empowered and give them the resources they need.

In just my brief beginning as an advocate I have already felt from survivors the benefits that I have provided them by listening, believing, and supporting them. By connecting them to resources, providing accompaniment to hospitals, law enforcement and courts, and offering referrals to mental health professionals and healthcare, we are empowering survivors on their path of healing.

That is why I believe it is so important that we fill the huge gap these cuts to VOCA will create. The services that advocates and other mental health professionals provide to survivors is critical to supporting survivors. And unfortunately, the demand for these services is increasing.

I want to thank the members of the Judicial Committee for considering my testimonial and I would ask them to support/vote in favor of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes.

Sincerely

[Stephen Nason](#)