

Cumberland County Violence Intervention Partnership

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PublicHealth
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Cumberland County, Maine

Testimony of Jennifer Annis Written testimony in support of L.D. 2084 An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services of Victims of Crime

Date of Public Hearing: January 23, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Jennifer Annis. I am the Project Manager for the Violence Intervention Partnership (VIP), a division of the Cumberland County Public Health Department. I am testifying on behalf of the Cumberland County Public Health Department in support of L.D. 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services of Victims of Crime.

VIP is Cumberland County's Coordinated Community Response to domestic and sexual abuse and is comprised of multidisciplinary community partners to include local domestic and sexual abuse providers, human trafficking providers, criminal and civil legal partners, representatives from elder abuse and child abuse agencies, medical providers, representatives from culturally specific organizations and more. VIP does not receive funding from the Victims of Crime Act, (VOCA), however, a majority of the member organizations do receive VOCA funding and are facing a critical shortfall in 2025.

VOCA has provided core funding to victims of crime for the past 40 years. In 2025, Maine's VOCA funding will be reduced by more than 60%. This loss of funding would have a catastrophic impact on our coordinated response to domestic and sexual abuse, and would result in staff layoffs and substantial cuts to already under-resourced programs in Cumberland County and across the state.

If Maine does not make up for the VOCA shortfall, the safety net of organizations that provide essential services to Mainers in times of great need would be devastated. VOCA funding has supported Mainers across the lifespan from child victims to victims of elder abuse, victims of gun violence, domestic and sexual abuse, human trafficking, stalking, homicide and other crimes. Every Mainer knows someone who has been impacted by one of these crimes. These cuts impact us all. Maine cannot afford to lose services that provide safety, support and healing to individuals and communities. I urge you to vote in favor of passing L.D. 2084 to continue the safety net for victims of crime here in Maine. Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.