

Testimony of Christina Kenney
Speaking in favor of LD2084,
"An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes"
Public Hearing Maine State Legislature
Tuesday, Jan 23, 2024

Senators and Representatives of Public Hearing for LD2084:

I am submitting testimony today supporting LD2084, "An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes." I have worked with families for over twenty years, most recently serving families who are involved with child abuse prevention. I currently serve on several child/family welfare-focused advocacy groups in Cumberland County. I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen.

Community-based service providers are on the front lines of child abuse and neglect prevention. Many different providers have regular contact with children and families, and no one holds the complete picture on their own. It is paramount to have organizations that look at all aspects of abuse and how that abuse is affecting families and address abuse with support, interventions, awareness, and prevention. All these efforts require a tremendous amount of collaboration and funding. There are many aspects of Maine's child abuse approach that are reactionary because of funding shortfalls. Suppose you want to make a more significant impact. In that case, you do not cut funding and invest in a team approach that is involved in all levels of prevention: primary prevention, secondary, and tertiary. To have a proactive approach instead of reacting to incidents.

Domestic violence is a high-risk factor for abuse in a family and a damaging experience for a child and their life in the short and long term. Domestic Violence is yet to be addressed in meaningful ways to protect the abused and the family as a whole. If funding is not earnestly provided, then what are we telling those who suffer Domestic Violence and the families who are torn apart by that violence? They do not matter; the state legislature would rather fund something else.

Maine must commit to its families and fund programming to support them. That is what LD 2084 does to fill the gaps. In addition, we as a state need to realize we are only as good as our people, and many of the people of Maine are struggling. You would not turn your back on someone in need if you met them at the grocery store or gas station. I believe you would offer help. LD 2084 is legislation that is broad help through its funding.

Domestic Violence as a risk factor is ranked higher than substance use disorder in Cumberland County among families where child abuse has occurred. Families that have occurrences of Domestic Violence have a higher proportion rate of neglect cases opened with Child Protective Services. Domestic Violence remains the highest risk factor in Cumberland County and throughout the State of Maine for Child Abuse and Neglect. LD 2084 will fill the funding gap, and hopefully, through this testimony, there will be an annual funding effort to offer portioned funds to mirror the actual need to reduce Domestic Violence instead of cap funds and reduce funds when families are suffering in Maine. We need LD2084 to fund the gaps.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely, Christina Kenney

Portland, ME christinakenneychildadvocate@yahoo.com , christandk@aol.com

christina kenney
portland
LD 2084

Testimony of Christina Kenney
Speaking in favor of LD2084,
"An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes"
Public Hearing Maine State Legislature
Tuesday, Jan 23, 2024

Senators and Representatives of Public Hearing for LD2084:

I am submitting testimony today supporting LD2084, "An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes." I have worked with families for over twenty years, most recently serving families who are involved with child abuse prevention. I currently serve on several child/family welfare-focused advocacy groups in Cumberland County. I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen.

Community-based service providers are on the front lines of child abuse and neglect prevention. Many different providers have regular contact with children and families, and no one holds the complete picture on their own. It is paramount to have organizations that look at all aspects of abuse and how that abuse is affecting families and address abuse with support, interventions, awareness, and prevention. All these efforts require a tremendous amount of collaboration and funding. There are many aspects of Maine's child abuse approach that are reactionary because of funding shortfalls. Suppose you want to make a more significant impact. In that case, you do not cut funding and invest in a team approach that is involved in all levels of prevention: primary prevention, secondary, and tertiary. To have a proactive approach instead of reacting to incidents.

Domestic violence is a high-risk factor for abuse in a family and a damaging experience for a child and their life in the short and long term. Domestic Violence is yet to be addressed in meaningful ways to protect the abused and the family as a whole. If funding is not earnestly provided, then what are we telling those who suffer Domestic Violence and the families who are torn apart by that violence? They do not matter; the state legislature would rather fund something else.

Maine must commit to its families and fund programming to support them. That is what LD 2084 does to fill the gaps. In addition, we as a state need to realize we are only as good as our people, and many of the people of Maine are struggling. You would not turn your back on someone in need if you met them at the grocery store or gas station. I believe you would offer help. LD 2084 is legislation that is broad help through its funding.

Domestic Violence as a risk factor is ranked higher than substance use disorder in Cumberland County among families where child abuse has occurred. Families that have occurrences of Domestic Violence have a higher proportion rate of neglect cases opened with Child Protective Services. Domestic Violence remains the highest risk factor in Cumberland County and throughout the State of Maine for Child Abuse and Neglect. LD 2084 will fill the funding gap, and hopefully, through this testimony, there will be an annual funding effort to offer portioned funds to mirror the actual need to reduce Domestic Violence instead of cap funds and reduce funds when families are suffering in Maine. We need LD2084 to fund the gaps.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely, Christina Kenney

Portland, ME christinakenneychildadvocate@yahoo.com , christandk@aol.com