

Testimony of the York County Committee on Homelessness
In Support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crime
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
1/18/2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, the York County Committee on Homelessness writes to you today in support of LD 2084 and the need for funding to maintain essential victim services in Maine.

My name is Susan Giambalvo and I am the Executive Director of Caring Unlimited in York County. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the York County Committee on Homelessness, which is comprised of representatives of fourteen community-based organizations and municipalities from across York County.¹ We have come together to work collaboratively to address the lack of affordable housing in York County, which is the primary cause of an explosion in the number of homeless individuals and families in our communities. We recognize that in our communities and across the state, victims' services are inextricably tied to preventing and reducing homelessness. We are testifying in favor of LD 2084.

Nationally, between 22 and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. Further, for mothers with children experiencing homelessness, more than 80% had previously experienced domestic violence². We also know that people who are homeless are at greater risk for other types of victimization and need the support of sexual assault resource centers, victim witness advocates, and legal services that will all be impacted by these cuts.

Domestic Violence Resource Centers, like Caring Unlimited in York County, are integral parts of our response to homelessness and the housing crisis statewide. Last year, these programs served 1030 households in their residential programs providing emergency shelter, transitional support, housing navigation, and supports to secure and maintain permanent housing³. This number does not even include the thousands more that were helped to stay safe in their homes through safety planning, emergency financial assistance, protection from abuse orders, and other creative and individualized solutions.

We ask you to support this critical funding for victim's services. Without these dollars, we will see a failure in our community safety net. Our York County neighbors will have substantially reduced access to the services that help them remain safe at home, including the 24-hour helpline, safety planning, and civil legal services due to staffing cuts necessitated by the loss of funds. At the same time, the loss of funds will impact Caring Unlimited's ability to fully fund

¹ Current members include representation from Caring Unlimited, Fair Tide, Sanford Housing Authority, Seeds of Hope, York Community Service Association, York County Community Action Corp., York County Shelter Programs, and the municipalities of Biddeford, Eliot, Kennebunk, Kittery, Old Orchard Beach, Saco and Sanford.

² [Domestic Violence and Homelessness: Statistics \(2016\) | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#)

³ [Statistics | Domestic Violence | MCEdV | Augusta, Maine](#)

their emergency shelter program. With Caring Unlimited being one of only two emergency shelter providers in our county, these cuts threaten to overwhelm already stressed systems, leading to even more demand for shelter and unsheltered homelessness.

We urge you to support LD 2084. It provides life-saving assistance for vulnerable Mainers who have experienced violence, abuse, and instability. With comprehensive services and support, people can and do find safety, security, and stability and our communities become healthy and prosperous places for all as a result.

Thank you for your attention. Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information if needed.

Sincerely,

Susan Giambalvo, Executive Director
Caring Unlimited
On behalf of the York County Committee on Homelessness

City of Biddeford
Jim Bennett /s/
James A. Bennett
City Manager

City of Saco
John Bohenko /s/
John Bohenko
City Administrator

Sanford Housing Authority
Diane Small /s/
Diane G. Small
Executive Director

Town of Eliot
Mike Sullivan /s/
Michael J. Sullivan
Town Manager

City of Sanford
Steve Buck /s/
Steven R. Buck
Sanford City Manager

Seeds of Hope
Vassie Folwer /s/
Vassie Fowler
Executive Director

Town of Kennebunk
Heather Balser /s/
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Susan Giambalvo /s/
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York Community Service Association
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Michelle Surdoval
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Town of Kittery
Kendra Amaral /s/
Kendra Amaral
Town Manager

Fair Tide
Emily Flinkstrom /s/
Emily Flinkstrom, MSW
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York County Community
Action Corporation
Carter Friend /s/
Carter Friend, CEO

Town of Old Orchard
Beach
Diana Asanza /s/
Diana H. Asanza
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York County Shelter
Programs
Megan Gean-Gendron /s/
Megan Gean-Gendron
Executive Director