

My Name is Sarah Krajewski and I am an advocate at Sexual Assault Support Services of MidCoast Maine. I am also a survivor. I'm writing in support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes.

When I was 14 years old, I was held down and sexually assaulted by a group of three older boys from my school. I never told anyone. I thought because I had been flirting with them that night it was my fault. I thought because my friends had left but I chose to stay, because I was there in the first place when my parents thought I was somewhere else, because I fought back at first and hurt one of them, that I would be in trouble. I was so full of shame and self-blame that I hid it for years.

Through my work supporting survivors I often think about how much I could've used the same support when I was a scared kid. But at that time, 32 years ago, I didn't know these agencies existed. At that time SASSMM educators weren't going into our schools to connect with youth. I didn't know there was support available to me. I didn't have the information on consent and boundaries that we now share with our communities every day.

I think about what will happen to our programs, agencies, communities and especially survivors, if we lose this vital funding. Our agencies will be forced to make tough choices on what and who to cut, which will affect how much presence we can have in vital spaces like hospitals, courts, schools, and police stations and our ability to educate our communities and support people when they are at their most vulnerable. More kids like me will have to carry these experiences without support and without the knowledge that they weren't at fault for what happened to them. I don't want anyone to have to go through what I did because we let these services disappear.

I urge you to support LD 2084, so we can continue provide the support that all survivors and their families deserve.