

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



March 20, 2025

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Jan Collins, I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here to support LD 117 An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services

[Data from the ACLU](#) shows that nearly 60% of people in women's prisons nationwide, and as many as 94% of some women's prison populations, have a history of physical or sexual abuse before being incarcerated.

Rates for any kind of abuse range from 16% - 68% for men. (Clark)

It is important to expand victims services for many reasons.

First, we want healing. The toll of abuse both sexual and physical is crushing to individuals, their families, and our communities. Abuse has a negative impact on mental health (anxiety, mood disorders, suicidality, and substance use disorder) **and** more severe criminal justice involvement. If we are to help victims become survivors and avoid some of the worst consequences of the abuse, we need to invest in the services that lead to healing.

Second, we need to care for the people who do the often exhausting emotional work of supporting survivors. With support and remuneration commensurate with the value we place on healing, we give the message that the work they do is important. The studies listed below show some of the ways we can provide for those who work in victims services. They include higher salaries and more control over their work.

We must expand victims services to keep from pushing people into the deep end of the pool where they flounder for lack of assistance. In some cases that means involvement with the legal system as a result of mental health conditions, substance use disorder, or as a means of escape from their abuser.

Imprisonment is a secondary source of trauma for these individuals. Incarceration is often a detriment to their healing, not a support. If we cannot prevent the abuse itself, then the least we can do is provide the very best supports possible for their healing.

Thank you for your support..

Sincerely,
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ACLU

<https://www.aclu.org/other/prison-rape-elimination-act-2003-prea?redirect=prisoners-rights-womens-rights/prison-rape-elimination-act-2003-prea>

Abuse History in Prisoners

Clark CB, Reiland SA, Armstrong JD, Ewy R, Cropsey KL. Characteristics Associated with a History of Physical and Sexual Abuse in a Community Corrections Sample. *Subst Use Misuse*. 2020;55(3):512-518. doi: 10.1080/10826084.2019.1686023. Epub 2019 Nov 14. PMID: 31724472; PMCID: PMC7012502.

Studies - Supporting Advocates

1. A study published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* in 2020 found that advocates who were paid higher salaries reported lower levels of emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout, than those who were paid less. The study also found that advocates who felt valued by their organizations were less likely to experience burnout.

Finally, it found that burnout was associated with lower levels of organizational commitment.

Turner, H. A., Wolf, R. K., & Ferentz, L. (2020). Supporting Advocates: Salaries, Values, and Burnout. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(17-18), 3709-3729. doi: 10.1177/0886260518775313

2. Another study published in the *Journal of Family Violence* in 2019 found that victim advocates who received higher salaries were more likely to report feeling satisfied with their jobs and less likely to report feeling emotionally exhausted.

Alaggia, R., & Clarke, J. (2019). Advocates' experiences of working with women who have experienced intimate partner violence: Implications for practice. *Journal of Family Violence*, 34(1), 55-64. doi: 10.1007/s10896-018-0005-8

3. A study published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* in 2017 found that advocates who had more control over their work and felt that they were able to make a difference in the lives of their clients were less likely to experience burnout. Higher salaries were one factor that contributed to advocates feeling more control over their work.

Gates, K. M., & Gillespie, L. K. (2017). The Role of Control in Understanding the Work Experiences of Victim Advocates. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(9), 1438-1462. doi: 10.1177/0886260515615786

4. Another study published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* in 2015 found that compassion fatigue was associated with decreased empathy among victim service providers. The study found that providers who experienced high levels of compassion fatigue were less likely to feel empathy for their clients, which could have negative implications for the quality of services they provided.

Bride, B. E., & Radey, M. (2015). Exploring Compassion Fatigue in Domestic Violence Advocates. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 28(2), 89-96. doi: 10.1002/jts.21995