

03.08.25

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of Health and Human Services Committee:

I am the Executive Director of Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM) and I am submitting testimony on behalf the agency, our staff and the community members we serve. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services.

As SARSSM's Executive Director, I have a broad view of the work SARSSM staff perform in service of victims and survivors of sexual violence. In my position, I am able to observe the path to healing, empowerment, and restoration that victims and survivors journey on with our team and partners. It is an honor to play a part in this life changing process.

And because of the role I hold, I am acutely aware of how funding shortages create staffing shortages, which engender increased barriers to service provision, resulting in less positive outcomes for the people who turn to us in their time of need.

Sexual Assault Center Advocates serve as a bridge to a victim's positive "what next" by providing emotional support, systems based knowledge and responsive referrals. We effort to lay a preventative foundation with children and youth serving adults to amplify their empowerment. Our Children's Advocacy Centers provide services to abused children and their families through centering the child in a legally sound, research based investigation, which promotes healing and positive, long term outcomes.

The people I work with are skilled professionals. In many ways they are also unicorns. Staff that provide sexual assault services must posses a balance of hard and soft skills that many occupations do not require. People who can provide quality, survivor-centered sexual assault services are not easily found nor easily replaced. While we do what we can to create workplaces that are exceptional, we must provide the means for our employees to meet their basic needs.

Please support this important bill so that we may continue to meet the needs of people impacted by sexual violence in Maine.

Sincerely,



Erin K Flood
Executive Director

sarssm.org

For 24/7 support: call the confidential Maine Sexual Assault Helpline at 1-800-871-7741

Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder -Rumi