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Limestone, ME
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Testimony in support of **LD875 An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence**

I write today to ask you to support *LD875 An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence*. I am a member of the Maine Permanent Commission for the Status of Women and a volunteer at the Hope & Justice Project in Aroostook County. When I am a helpline volunteer, I take calls from survivors asking about resources for shelter and how to protect their children, from adult children concerned about their sibling's financial relationship with their elderly parents, or from a neighbor worried what they observe or hear next door and wondering how or if they should address it.

Living in rural northern Maine, sometimes we think "that doesn't happen here." But it does. I take those calls. I listen while a woman in southern Aroostook talks through the night before and wonders what will happen tonight. I hear the children in the car while a mother stands outside the Sav-A-Lot and tells me why she's okay tonight, but she's not sure where she'll sleep tomorrow or the next day when he's back. I hold space for the mother of a daughter, the one that you think has the perfect life, who is so worried about what's happening in that big new house on the hill that she's sobbing into my ear. I do this as a volunteer to try to give the staff at Hope & Justice a night without the phone ringing. And it does ring.

Women and their families in our small towns and communities in Aroostook County are affected by domestic abuse and violence. They need the support of the local Domestic Violence Resource Center professional staff to access the services and resources that are available to them. Those same staff offer a caring & safe space for survivors as they work with legal teams and/or DHHS. They offer emergency shelter when it's needed. They help find long-term housing that's safe, secure, and free from violence. They are there to listen, to help process large emotions during difficult times, to share in the joyful times, and they are very, very good at it. Sometimes, they are there for a one-time problem-solving conversation that changes the life of the person on the other end of the phone.

But they can't operate on volunteer hours only and they can't continue to do this on shoestring budgets. Please support *LD875 An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence* because without this funding increase, survivors of abuse and violence in Aroostook and around Maine will not be able to access vital services at a critical time in their lives.

Thank you.