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As an advocate at a domestic violence resource center, I have learned how essential the work of our colleagues at Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM) is. 1 in 3 women will experience some form of violence in her lifetime. Domestic abuse and sexual assault often occur in tandem, and having knowledgeable and empathetic advocates available for survivors of both can make a world of difference!

SASSMM and the Maine Coalition to End Sexual Assault (MECASA) offer trauma-informed advocacy and education to students, healthcare professionals, businesses, and school staff in our communities. Law enforcement, in particular, depends upon the work of the Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center (MCAC) a safe, neutral, child-centered program that coordinates a team of specialized professionals following concerns of child sexual abuse.

Can you imagine the time, effort, and cost that would be involved in recreating the services offered by MECASA and their member organizations, including 24/7 helplines, support groups for victims, advocates to accompany survivors to hospital and court, outreach and education, and one-on-one advocacy? We are lucky to have advocates trained to address instances of rape, incest, child sexual abuse, battery, groping, stalking, threats and coercion, child sexual abuse materials, up-skirt and other non-consensual intimate photography, cat-calling, victim blaming, homophobia/transphobia, and more.

It takes a community to end sexual violence, and I thank the legislature for doing their part to fund this critical work!