

Mark Holmquist  
Scarborough Police Department  
LD 875

Testimony of Bridgton, Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth,  
Cumberland, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, Falmouth, Gorham, Scarborough,  
Westbrook, Windham, Yarmouth, and the University of Southern Maine  
In Support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic  
Violence  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
March 19th, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representatives Meyers, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, the following law enforcement departments in Cumberland County: Bridgton, Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Cumberland, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, Falmouth, Gorham, Scarborough, Westbrook, Windham, Yarmouth, and University of Southern Maine Police Departments are writing in support of LD 875 and the need for funding for essential services for victims of domestic violence in Maine.

Our departments have worked beside Through These Doors, the only domestic violence resource center in Cumberland County for decades. Through These Doors is one of Maine's network of domestic violence resource centers that provides critical, wrap-around-services for survivors of domestic abuse and their children. In 2024, Through These Doors reported serving 2,856 unduplicated individuals, answering 6,831 helpline calls, and supporting 694 people through the court process. It also should be highlighted that TTD received 1,657 police reports from all law enforcement agencies in Cumberland County and were successful in initiating contact and offering support services to 779 victims/survivors in 2023 and 2024. These contacts provide additional information about the criminal legal process, offer emotional support and safety planning, and create another lifeline in the community to repair the isolation that many victims of domestic violence face.

Law Enforcement Departments in Cumberland County have had a longstanding collaborative partnership with Through These Doors. Starting with Portland Police Department creating office space at their department for TTD advocates to work out from the early 1980's to the creation of the Enhanced Police Intervention Program (EPIC) in 2009. Law Enforcement and TTD Advocates have come together to support survivors and hold offenders accountable. This partnership is one of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and commitment to a shared goal of a safer community.

The EPIC program has expanded to every law enforcement department in Cumberland County with the goal to build a solid coordinated community response between the local domestic violence resource organization and law enforcement departments. The initiative has allowed trained domestic violence advocates to work with each department to provide either in-person follow-up services or phone follow-up after there has been a report generated to support survivors, hold offenders accountable, and to address gaps in systems that support these goals. This program also hosts High Risk Response Teams at many departments in Cumberland County that consist of domestic violence advocates and law enforcement officers. These teams review cases, assess dynamics that increase the likelihood of lethality, and collaborate to create opportunities for intervention and response to cases of domestic violence. In 2024, Through These Doors hosted 28 of these team meetings across the county, discussing 108 cases involving dynamics of strangulation, sexual assault, serial battering, suicidality, and homicide threats, among other high-risk factors highlighted by the Maine Homicide Review Panel.

The Bridgton, Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Cumberland, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, Falmouth, Gorham, Scarborough, Westbrook, Windham, Yarmouth and University of Southern Maine Police Departments fully supports LD 875 to fund resources for lifesaving services and to fulfil the state's commitment to victims of domestic abuse. We rely on Through These Doors to help victims/survivors in our

communities through their 24-hour helpline available 365 days a year, safe shelter programs, court advocacy, and more. Law enforcement is only able to make an arrest in domestic violence cases when a crime has been committed. There are many times when officers are concerned about a domestic violence victim's safety but lack enforceable options for changing the safety concerns. In these cases, we depend on the skills of domestic violence advocates to provide information to victims about other avenues to safety. Sustained funding for these programs means less turnover in staffing for advocates. This increases the skills of individual advocates and the strength of the partnerships between our departments and the staff at Through These Doors.

Please support LD875 to ensure TTD and other domestic violence resource centers remain available for survivors and their children when they need services the most.

Thank you for your consideration.

Phillip A. Jones, Bridgton Police Department

Chief Scott Stewart, Brunswick Police Department

Chief Paul Fenton, Cape Elizabeth Police Department

Chief Charles Rumsey, Cumberland Police Department

Sheriff Kevin Joyce, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office

Chief John F. Kilbride, Falmouth Police Department

Chief Chris Sanborn, Gorham Police Department

Chief Mark A Holmquist, Scarborough Police Department

Chief Sean Lally, Westbrook Police Department

Chief Kevin Scholfield, Windham Police Department

Chief Dan Gallant, Yarmouth Police Department

Chief Grainne Perkins, Ph.D. University of Southern Maine